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Unbecoming Romans

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Matthew S. Crum

Committee in charge:

Professor Edward Watts, Chair
Professor Mira Balberg
Professor Denise Demetriou
Professor Page duBois
Professor Anthony Kaldellis

2024

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University of California San Diego

2024

DEDICATION

*For Laura, Mara & Lita,
my three beautiful girls*

EPIGRAPH

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

K.P. Kavafis

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHR: The American Historical Review

AntTard: Antiquité Tardive, Revue Internationale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie

BAS: Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula

BABesch: Babesch, Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology

Byzantion: Byzantion, Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines

ByzF: Byzantinische Forschungen

ByzSlav: Byzantinoslavica

ByzZ: Byzantinische Zeitschrift

CIL: Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum

CLANT: Classical Antiquity

CCO: Collectanea Christiana Orientalia

CQ: The Classical Quarterly

DOP: Dumbarton Oaks Papers

EHR: The English Historical Review

EME: Early Medieval Europe

GRBS: Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies

JNES: Journal of Near Eastern Studies

JÖByz: Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik

JRA: Journal of Roman Archaeology

Latomus: Latomus, Revue d'Études Latine

MEFRM: Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge

MS: Mediaeval Studies

PBSR: Papers of the British School at Rome

REByz: Revue des Études Byzantines

RSBN: Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici

RSI: Rivista Storica Italiana

T&MByz: Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines

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committee to have read any of my work. I have treasured our long phone calls about the state of Baltimore sports, which have often served as a much-needed distraction. My graduate studies have taken me far away from my younger brothers, Alexander and Evan. I (and their nieces) hope that we are all soon in a place where we can more frequently spend time with one another. My respect for you both continues to grow, and I am always happy to see how you have grown and succeeded. Despite the physical distance, I have never really felt far from my parents, Stephen and Robin. The many video calls and visits have been so important in connecting our family. You are very frequently on the mind of our girls, who eagerly await the next time that they might see you. My love for you motivates me in everything that I do.

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Unbecoming Romans

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Edward Watts, Chair

“Unbecoming Romans” is an exploration of Romanness as an ethnic identity at the geographic margins of the Eastern Roman state, especially between the eighth and tenth centuries. It consists of a series of case studies focused on the Central Mediterranean that investigate the expressions and perceptions of Roman identity among populations living in the most distant provinces of Romanía.

This study reconnects the inhabitants of Crete, Sicily, Southern Italy, and Central Italy to the broader political and ethnic community of the Romans. Modern scholarship historically has not interpreted these communities through the lens of Romanness, and it has tended to render them as Greeks, Byzantines, or by various local identifiers. This enduring scholarly tradition, which

marginalizes the Romans of the east from their ancient Roman past, has been forcefully challenged, but its manifestation in the outer provinces of Romanía has received less attention. The conceptualization of these spaces has been affected by the nature and availability of the sources, by the reception of their respective histories in more modern national narratives, and by pre-modern notions of identity.

By recovering the Romanness of those inhabiting these distant provinces, this project challenges long-standing ideas about their identity. It shows that these populations expressed their Roman identity and that these self-expressions were accepted by others. It accomplishes the recovery of this identity by demonstrating the connections between the populations of the provinces and the rest of Romanía, as evidenced in the literary and material record. In recognizing the Romanness of these populations, this project establishes a point of comparison by which the expressions and perceptions of Roman identity can be further analyzed. My dissertation reveals the multiplicity of ways that being Roman might be expressed and the disconnect that can take place between expressions of identity on the ground and its reception by onlookers, who may be constrained by their own literary and ideological context. Thus, such study allows us to understand how various narratives about the lapsing of Roman identity developed in different circumstances.

INTRODUCTION: Looking toward the Provinces

The so-called refugees who are ordered to point out the roads and furnish certain information must be very closely watched. Even some Romans have given in to the times, forget their own people, and prefer to gain the good will of the enemy. Those who remain loyal ought to be rewarded, and the evildoers punished.¹

This passage comes from the *Strategikon*, a sixth century military manual written by the emperor Maurikios, as part of his discussion on the “characteristics and tactics of various peoples.” In this section of the text, Maurikios brings attention to those neighboring the Danube River and warns his readers about those who were occasionally displaced by the warring kings who lived near the Roman border. The Romans of this region are included among those whom he appears suspicious of, as some have “given in to the times” and “forget their own people.” Maurikios identifies these people as Romans despite his suspicions of their loyalty to the state, but uncertainty is expressed in analogous examples. He acknowledges that the identity of strangers, whether they are “Romans or foreigners,” is often difficult to ascertain.² His assumption appears to be that he could ultimately distinguish between non-Romans and Romans, like himself. Outside of the Roman state, in contrast, Maurikios’ own Roman identity was not accepted by all. Paul the Deacon, who wrote a Latin-language history in eighth century Italy, and some modern scholars withheld the Roman ethnonym from Maurikios.³ The view looking toward the provinces and

¹ Maurikios, *Strategikon* 11.4.

² Maurikios, *Strategikon* 11.4.

³ See discussion of Maurikios’ supposed Armenian ancestry in A. Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 182-184. Paul the Deacon writes that Maurikios is a Cappadocian and Greek by *gens* in the *History of the Lombards* 3.15.

returning from it reveals the potential ways in which being Roman might be interpreted and contested among both ancient and modern writers.

This study is an exploration of Romanness as an ethnic identity in Romanía with a particular focus on the geographic margins of the state. It examines both the ways in which those who identified as Romans adopted new or preexisting non-Roman identities and the basis upon which various contemporary and modern observers knowingly rejected the identity of those who self-identified as Romans. Thus, there are two manners of “unbecoming” that this study observes – there is the expression of this identity in local communities and the perception of that identity by those looking on.

The recovery of Roman identity in Romanía and the serious consideration of its salience has been a relatively recent phenomenon, one which has fundamentally challenged many assumptions about the nature of this state. Many of the works of Anthony Kaldellis have demonstrated that the inhabitants of Romanía viewed themselves not only as forming a political community in continuity with the foundation of the Roman state, but also as an ethnic one bound by the belief in a set of shared cultural characteristics and a sense of distinction from other groups.⁴ The various markers of ethnicity that Roman authors highlight include: common ethnonym, homeland, religion, language, customs, consumption patterns, shared history, and shared experience – all of which, in conjunction with participation in the polity Romans, could demarcate Romans

⁴ Among these many works, see especially Kaldellis, *Romanland; Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and “From Rome to New Rome, From Empire to Nation State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium’s Roman Identity,” in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, eds. L. Grig and G. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 387-404.

from non-Roman “others.”⁵ Likewise, non-Roman observers recognized these same characteristics to group together the inhabitants of Romanía in a given context, regardless of what ethnonym they ultimately employed.⁶ At times, Roman writers used taxonomic language, referring to the Roman *genos*, *ethnos*, or *phylon* as distinct from other groups categorized as “barbarian.”⁷ An appreciation of Romanness as an aspect of the identity of those inhabiting the east Roman state is therefore a necessary component in interpreting the lived experience of those who participate in this state and how they represented their story.

The long scholarly dismissal of Roman identity in the east is multi-faceted, having its roots in the Latin west’s claims to the Roman legacy, pre-war notions of primordial ethnicity, and various nationalistic traditions.⁸ This has historically led scholars to view the inhabitants of the Roman state as Greeks, Byzantines, or other various ethnic groups in a manner that occluded the possibility of assimilation into the Roman ethnic community. The withholding of this identity to east Romans also has reasons specific to the study of the provinces collectively and individually. The relative laxity of imperial attention toward the provinces and their distance from Constantinople

⁵ See the discussion and bibliography in K. Durak and I. Jevtić, “Identity and the Other in Byzantine Studies: An Introduction,” in *Identity and the Other in Byzantium: Papers from the Fourth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, eds. K. Durak and I. Jevtić (Istanbul: Koç University Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Antique and Byzantine Studies, 2019), 3-22; M. Mullet, “The ‘Other’ In Byzantium,” in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. D.C. Smythe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 1-22; E. Mitsiou, “The Byzantines and the ‘Others’: Between ‘Transculturality’ and Discrimination,” in *Byzantium as a Bridge between West and East*, eds. C. Gastgeber and F. Daim (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), 65-74.

⁶ See, for example, N.M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium as Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); and L. Berto, “The Image of the Byzantines in Early Medieval South Italy: The Viewpoint of the Chroniclers of the Lombards (9th–10th centuries) and Normans (11th century),” *Mediterranean Studies* 22.1 (2014): 1-37.

⁷ G. Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21-26.

⁸ Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 3-37.

have been cited as a hinderance to the formation of collective interests.⁹ It has also been argued that Romanness was an elite level discourse artificially imposed upon the inhabitants of the provinces, who lacked engagement with the notions of being Roman that circulated in Constantinople and instead expressed their own regional identities.¹⁰ Furthermore, some have understood references to Romans as a purely political identity equivalent with being subject to the emperor and unifying multiple ethnic groups under one label. The historiographic tendencies particular to a specific Roman province can have their own reasons for rejecting notions of being Roman. The history of Roman Crete, for example, has been discussed in terms of both a continuity and discontinuity of Greekness that reflect competing nationalist traditions.¹¹ Such claims obfuscate and homogenize Roman attitudes toward those inhabiting the provinces and the management of their relationships with them.

Despite the occasional disdain that some of the sources show toward the people of the provinces and the discontent toward imperial authority that can arise from those regions, it should not be assumed that the inhabitants of the more distant parts of Romanía were not connected to those nearer to Constantinople. It has been demonstrated that Roman ethnic affiliation was expressed across various social levels and geographic contexts.¹² That non-Roman groups or individuals could, over time, come to be accepted

⁹ On the nature of the relationship between the imperial court and the provinces, see L. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) – though this scholar does not take the view that this inhibited a common Roman identity.

¹⁰ I. Stouraitis, “Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107 (2014): 175–220.

¹¹ See, for example, the discussion of Greek prejudice toward Crete in M. Herzfeld, “Localism and the Logic of Nationalistic Folklore: Cretan Reflections,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.2 (2003): 281-310.

¹² Kaldellis, “The Social Scope of Roman Identity in Byzantium: An Evidence-Based Approach,” *Byzantina Symmeikta* 27 (2017): 173-210; and “Byzantine Identity Interrogated, Declared, Activated,” in *Identities: Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium “Days of Justinian I,” Skopje, 15-16 November, 2019* (Skopje: Institute of National History, 2020), 21-36.

as Romans is well-represented in the literary sources.¹³ Moreover, some of ways in which this identity was reinforced throughout the state have been ascertained. Romans moved throughout Romanía, making contact with Constantinople or other provinces.¹⁴ Through the promulgation of law emperors appeared as the protectors of the Roman people and taxes paid to the state were paid with coinage bearing the imperial image.¹⁵ The acclamation of a new emperor or the death of a former were announced in Roman cities, and prayers for both the emperor and the polity of the Romans were made in religious ceremonies.¹⁶ Non-Romans connected provincial population's language, customs, material culture, and personal names to other parts of the Roman state. All of which could bind the peoples of the provinces to a sense of belonging to the Roman community.

For earlier Roman periods, such as under the republic or in the early imperial periods, there has been much more discussion of identity in the Roman provinces. Many of these are centered on the process Romanization, which in its simplest definition means the interaction of non-Romans with Roman culture.¹⁷ For later periods of Roman history,

¹³ Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 123-154. See also, A.E. Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms of Integration," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds. H. Ahrweiler and A.E. Laiou (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 161-181.

¹⁴ M. McCormick, "The Imperial Edge: Italo-Byzantine Identity, Movement and Integration into the Byzantine Empire, A.D. 650-950," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds. H. Ahrweiler and A.E. Laiou (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 17-52.

¹⁵ On imperial imagery, see P. Karlin-Hayter, "Appartenir à l'Empire," in *Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, ed. C. Dendrinos, J. Harris, E. Harvalla-Crook, and J. Herrin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 117-130. On Roman law, see E. McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

¹⁶ McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 231-259.

¹⁷ On the long historiographic tradition of Romanization and debates over its utility and methodology, see N. Terrenato, "The Romanization of Italy: Global Acculturation or Cultural Bricolage?," in *TRAC 97: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Nottingham 1997*, ed. C. Forcey, J. Hawthorne, and R. Witcher (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998), 20-27; and P. Le Roux "La Romanisation en question," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 59.2 (2004): 287-311. For a selection of studies on Roman identity in the provinces, see L. Revell, *Ways of Being Roman: Discourses of Identity in the Roman West* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016); G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and D. Mattingly, "Being Roman" Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting," *JRA* 17 (2004): 5-25.

much of the interest in identity in the east Roman state focused on the many minority groups living within Romanía or the extents to which certain provinces like Sicily and the Peloponnese were Hellenized, rather than a focus on the Roman ethnic community.¹⁸ However, scholarly attention has now also turned toward a more comprehensive study of Romanness as an ethnic identity in a late antique and provincial context. One recent study, for example, explored the many notions of Romanness that in late antiquity and with a particular focus on the western provinces.¹⁹ Likewise, there have been several studies of Romanness in post-sixth century Italy, wherein many different traditions evolved, though the identity of the peninsula's Greek-speaking Christian community has continued to be understood in terms of Greekness, religious identity, and political affiliation.²⁰ Perhaps the most concerted effort to explore Roman identity in the provinces of Romanía has been *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium*, which includes several chapters that look toward those living at the margins of this state.²¹ Such studies have demonstrated the many meanings that may be derived from being Roman and how notions of this identity transformed over time, but there remains much to be examined in an east Roman context.

¹⁸ See, for example, P. Charanis, "Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century," *DOP* 13 (1959): 23-44.

¹⁹ W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni, and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt, eds. *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018). See also, E. Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities in Spain and Gaul, 500–700: From Romans to Goths and Franks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

²⁰ A. Peters-Custot, "Between Rome and Constantinople: The Romanness of Byzantine Southern Italy," in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni, and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); and Stouraitis, "Byzantine Romanness: From Geopolitical to Ethnic Conceptions," in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni, and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

²¹ M. Stewart, D. Parnell, and C. Whately, eds. *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

There is a value to the study of identity in the provinces, for it is here that notions of being Roman are more often confronted and contested. The contours of a particular understanding of Romanness that might exist are revealed in instances when Romans and non-Romans converge. As one scholar notes, it is when the inhabitants of southern Italy leave their familiar context and face others that their “Byzantineness” becomes observable.²² The potential disconnect between how identity is expressed in a local context and is perceived by outside observers likewise becomes apparent. A particular group’s identity can be interpreted differently depending on who is doing the interpreting and in what context, revealing both the expectations of the observer and the difficulties of categorization. This is especially the case for those who share attributes with one or more groups. The observers whose views of the provinces are the subject of this study faced not only geographic distance, but also the passage of time, as they reflected upon the development of imperial relationships with those living in these regions. This includes the Roman recollection of how the provinces and their inhabitants became separated from the shared community of the Romans or how these observers conceptualized the reintegration of formerly Roman spaces. An examination of identity in the provinces benefits the ongoing scholarly discussion of expressions and perceptions of being Roman in the east Roman state.

The course of this study consists of a series of case studies that explore questions of Romanness at the geographic margins of the Roman state. Each chapter considers a specific region and briefly discusses its history as a Roman province. Then the chapters introduce both the reasons why each province should initially be understood as a Roman space and the reasons

²² Peters-Custot, “L’identité des Grecs de l’Italie méridionale byzantine,” *Néa Rhômè. Rivista di Ricerche bizantinische* 3 (2006): 189-206.

why this has seldom been the view of modern scholarship. Finally, each chapter places what is observable about identity as it is expressed in these local contexts into conversation with how that identity is perceived by outside observers. Through this comparison, it is revealed how the sources perceive those inhabiting the provinces and how their specific contexts affected their representations.

The first case study examines the island of Crete with a specific focus on the period after the conquest of the island by Muslims from Spain in the early part of the ninth century and the reconquest of the island by Nikephoros Phokas in 961. The internal history of the island between these two events has been marked by a polarity as to how the relationships between the Greek-speaking inhabitants and their Arabic-speaking counterparts has been represented by modern scholarship. Because of the exaggeration of a few contemporary sources and the influence of modern nationalist histories, it has been understood that the collective identity of the Cretans was either entirely preserved or that it was entirely subsumed under the Muslim emirate. By reconsidering the supposed exceptionality of several examples of Roman integration into Muslim-Cretan society and placing them beside analogous examples, this chapter argues that the active assimilation of the descendants of Cretan Romans can be observed and was encouraged by the emirate. The final part of this chapter examines how the Roman perception of Crete and its inhabitants had developed by synthesizing their views of the reconquest of the island in 961, which has been mislabeled as a “liberation” by some modern scholarship. It finds that Constantinopolitan sources viewed the island primarily through the presence its Muslim inhabitants, that the potential Romanness of Greek-speaking Cretans was not accepted, and that this population fell somewhere in between the Roman and non-Roman dichotomy.

Chapter two begins with the nearly synchronous Muslim expedition on the island of Sicily at the invitation of a rebellious Roman official. Unlike in the case of Crete, however, this campaign would take successive generations to complete, and the intermittent Roman responses that continued until the eleventh century would not culminate in the recovery of the island. This chapter first reexamines the relationship between Sicily and Romanía. The island's distance and apparent tendency for rebellion has been understood in terms of separation and distinctiveness from the Roman state. By demonstrating the island's connection to the rest of the Roman world, it is then possible to explore the extent to which those connections were maintained as imperial territory in Sicily receded. A Greek-speaking Christian population remained prominent in Sicily throughout the period, and Arabic and Greek-language sources originating from within the island continued to associate its population with those living beyond it. Roman sources looking toward Sicily, however, show reticence to include those populations as part of the Roman ethnic community and appear to only do so when those populations live within the borders of the state.

The third chapter turns to the neighboring provinces of southern Italy. In this region, the Roman state contended with the Gothic and Lombard kingdoms in Italy. Similar to Sicily, the Greek-speaking population of these provinces were accepted as Romans and local hagiographic literature appears to take place in a Roman context. The focus of this chapter is primarily on the perception of the southern Italian provinces produced under the early emperors of the Macedonian dynasty. These sources tell a story of southern Italian continuity with and renewal of a supposed Roman past. They reimagine that the multi-ethnic composition of the Italian provinces and the set of alliances maintained there adheres to an ancient Roman order restored by the emperors of this dynasty, masking the relationships and history of the peoples of southern Italy with Constantinople.

The fourth chapter changes the perspective from east Roman views toward the provinces to explore notions of Romanness that developed and circulated within the Italian peninsula. It begins with surveying a body of fifth and sixth century literature to establish that broad conceptions of Romanness existed that could group together those inhabiting the peninsula with those Romans living in the east. This chapter focuses on the cities of Rome and Ravenna to investigate alternative conceptions of Romanness that arose as the cities of the province of Italy separated from a Roman political and ethnic community. In the papal tradition, the position of emperor of the Romans and the political entity of the Roman state are tied to the collective rights of the inhabitants of the city of Rome. Once the emperors residing in Constantinople were perceived to no longer meet this more exclusive conception of being Roman, the papal sources rejected their Romanness and labeled them as “Greeks.” The influence of papal notions of being Roman is evident in a number of texts produced in former imperial territories, especially in Ravenna. A mid-ninth century text produced in this city associates the Roman past with the city of Rome, not the emperors in Constantinople.

The conclusion brings together observations common across these case studies and places them in discussion with analogous examples, introducing some final remarks on the potential significance of this study for the understanding of Roman identity and suggesting a possible path forward for continued research.

Before proceeding to the individual chapters, it is necessary for a short note on the choice of the term ethnicity as an analytical category and an explanation of the transliteration of terms. This study elects to view the Roman community through the lens of ethnicity rather than race. At times these categories are treated nearly interchangeably by modern scholarship, which has

recognized that both of ethnicity and race are socially constructed.²³ The term ethnicity, however, lacks the implied attention to physical or biological features and the emphasis on descent that can accompany both modern and historical conceptions of race. Rather, it is primarily a way for social groups to continually organize themselves in contrast to others, at times imbuing aspects of culture with the ability to express difference.²⁴ This is not to suggest that the sources are preoccupied with notions of ethnicity, or that race could not have a place in the study of Romanía or that the primary sources can make use of language that meet definitions of race that include a biological component.²⁵ The subjects of this study appear to place little value on supposedly inherited characteristics and, as the anecdote that introduces this study suggests, physical features or claims of descent were generally not sufficient in attaching an individual to the broader community of Romans. Rather, ethnicity is among the influences that shaped the actions of the subjects of the Roman state, and the belief that the Romans were a cohesive ethnic group affected how its historians represented the history of their state.

As for the transliteration of proper nouns, this study generally opts to Hellenize the names of the peoples and places discussed in keeping with the intent of recovering their self-expressed identity. Yet, to avoid potential confusion and in consideration of the reader, this study preserves particularly well-known names in their Latinized or Anglicized forms. Constantine I, for example, preserves his conventional name, as opposed to the rendering of Konstantinos IV. The provinces and cities share the same distinction. The island of Crete receives an Anglicized

²³ Heng adopts a definition of race “to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups.” See G. Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 27.

²⁴ F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

²⁵ See, for example, R. Betancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality: Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

form whereas Iraklio is transliterated from the Greek. What is considered conventional and what is not is certainly subjective, but I have attempted to remain internally consistent in these decisions and I acknowledge that each individual choice will not be agreeable to every reader.

CHAPTER 1: Crete

In the 820s, a group of exiled Andalusian Muslims departed from the city of Alexandria and initiated a conquest of the island of Crete.²⁶ The sequence of events is not entirely clear, but it appears that the Muslims quickly took control of much of the island upon arrival and completed their conquest by 843 at the latest.²⁷ From their position on Crete, the Muslims raided many of the nearby islands and much of the Aegean littoral for over a century.²⁸ Contemporary Roman historians and hagiographers lamented the harm caused to Roman populations, and their works reflect a general sense of anxiety that emanated from the island.²⁹ The Muslims repelled several successive attempts by the Romans to recapture the island over the course of the ninth and tenth centuries.³⁰ It was only in 961, approximately 130 years after the establishment of the Muslim emirate on Crete, that an expedition led by the soon-to-be emperor Nikephoros Phokas returned the island to Roman rule, under which it would remain for nearly two and a half centuries.³¹ Thus,

²⁶ The dating of the Muslim conquest of Crete has received much attention from scholars and has generally been placed between 824 and 828. See D. Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete: From the 5th Century to the Venetian Conquest* (Athens: S.D. Basilopoulos, 1988), 30-41; A.A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* vol. 1, eds. H. Grégoire and M. Canard (Brussels: Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales, 1935-1968), 55; V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (CA. 824): a Turning Point in the Struggle between Byzantium and Islam* (Athens: Akademia Athenon, 1984), 85-87. There is some evidence that suggests a slightly earlier date for the conquest, perhaps the year 822. See J. Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829-842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 200-208.

²⁷ Some have argued that the conquest of Crete occurred over a period of several years or even decades. See: Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 40-41; N. Panagiotakis, “Ζητήματά τινα τῆς κατακτήσεως τῆς Κρήτης ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀράβων,” *Κρητικὰ Χρονικὰ* 15-16 (1961-1962): 17-28.

²⁸ See Christides, “The Raids of the Moslems of Crete in the Aegean Sea: Piracy and Conquest,” *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 76-111.

²⁹ The fear caused by Cretan raids are represented in a number of contemporary hagiographies. See, for example, *The Life of Saint Theodoros of Kythera*, *Life of Saint Loukas of Steiris*, and *Life of Saint Theokiste of Lesbos*.

³⁰ Some of these failures were particularly disastrous for the Romans. See C.G. Makrypoulas, “Byzantine Expeditions against the Emirate of Crete c. 825-949,” *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (2000): 347-362; Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 41-58. The records for two of these expeditions (in 911 and 949) are preserved in Konstantinos VII, *Book of Ceremonies* 2.44-45. See P. Yannopoulos, “Quelques 'a côté' des expéditions byzantines contre l'Émirat de Crète en 911 et 949,” *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011): 135-164.

³¹ For the re-conquest see Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 58-74.

the island of Crete and its inhabitants were wholly separated from Romanía and were reconnected to it after more than a century apart.

The specific circumstances of the loss and subsequent recovery of Crete allow for a discussion of the extent to which the Roman population of Crete preserved aspects of their identity during the period of Muslim rule and the underlying factors that may have contributed to their active assimilation into the emirate of Crete. An examination of the sources reveals that, by the time of the Roman conquest in the middle of the tenth century, some of the descendants of the Cretan Romans no longer shared several of the observable markers of Romanness. Namely, at least part of this group integrated into Cretan Muslim society, ceasing to practice their Roman religion and customs in the process.

Furthermore, a study of Crete during this period provides insight into how Romans conceptualized the group identity of formerly Roman subjects who no longer resided within the confines of their state. Contemporary Roman sources presented the descendants of Cretan Romans as either a third group, one that they considered neither Roman nor Muslim, or as a population that no longer survived. When the sources acknowledged the descendants of Cretan Romans, there was little expression of any ethnic affinity. Instead, they alleged that this group had long become distinct from other Romans, primarily because they no longer held in common their religion and customs, and they had formed social relationships with Cretan Muslims. Narratives of the reconquest in 961 likewise did not frame this conflict as the liberation of co-ethnics or even co-religionists, but as a struggle between Romans and barbarians, who had deprived the island of its Roman population. Thus, this chapter examines not only how some Cretan Romans came to identify with the Muslim community on Crete, but also how the sources characterized the fate of

the island's Roman population and how their perceptions may have differed from the actual historical circumstances.

The Romanness of Crete

The Romanness of this community before the ninth century has not always been taken for granted by modern scholarship. The Cretans, like most inhabitants of the east Roman state, have commonly been referred to as Greeks rather than Romans.³² For example, it has been suggested that little had changed for the people of Crete living under Roman rule and that, by the ninth century, Crete had only adopted a “veneer of Roman characteristics.”³³ Some have searched for Hellenic elements in the history Roman Crete, likely in an attempt to demonstrate continuity with the people of the modern-day Greek state.³⁴ Others have referred to the population of Roman Crete as Byzantine, Cretan without any additional ethnonym, or simply as Christian.³⁵ In part, this is because much of the scholarship on Roman Crete does not yet reflect more recent investigation of identity in Romanía. Therefore, when scholarship has addressed the topic of ethnic identity among the Cretans in the Roman period, it has not always done so in terms of Romanness.

There are reasons to think that the populations of more distant provinces considered themselves, on the whole, to be part of a larger Roman community. The Cretan experience does

³² See Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 150; A.M. Shepard, “The Byzantine Reconquest of Crete: A Historical Example of the Silent Pressure of Sea Power,” *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (1941): 1128.

³³ Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, 97-98. Christides attributes this primarily to the continued use of the Greek language on Crete, but Greek comes to be considered as the language of the Romans (with Latin becoming the ancestral language), eventually taking the name *Romaic*. See Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 98-106.

³⁴ Voulgarakis notes this problem for the scholarship of Crete in particular. See E. Voulgarakis, “Nikon Metanoëite und die Rechristianisierung der Kreter vom Islam,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 47 (1963): 198 fn. 34.

³⁵ For example, Christians are referred to by R. Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 144, 264, and 272; “the descendants of the ancient Christian inhabitants” by G. Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle: Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1890), 78 and 96; and local Byzantine communities are referenced by M.G. Randazzo, “Archaeological Approaches to the Islamic Emirate of Crete (820s-961 CE): a Starting Point,” *Journal of Greek Archaeology* 4 (2019): 312-313.

not appear aberrant from those in other outlying parts of the Roman state, though it did have its own distinctive characteristics.³⁶ The island had long been integrated into the Roman administrative structure.³⁷ It had received both civil and ecclesiastic officials from other parts of the Roman state and sent Cretans abroad to serve in the imperial administration.³⁸ The seals of some of these individuals are preserved.³⁹ Even before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212, when nearly all of the inhabitants of the Roman state were made full citizens, there is evidence that some Cretans were identifying with an ethnic community of Romans.⁴⁰ Contemporary Romans recognized that Crete was a part of Romanía and blamed its loss on the moral failings and incompetence of those leading the Roman state at that time.⁴¹ The tenth century panegyrist Theodosios the Deacon reflected that the island had become “bereft of [our] children” by the time

³⁶ In a very brief discussion, Sonnabend posits that the Cretans came to view themselves as Romans. See H. Sonnabend, “Roman Rule and Cretan Identity,” in *Creta romana e protobizantina: atti del congresso internazionale* vol. 1, ed. M. Livadiotti and I. Simiakaki (Padua: Bottega d'Erasmio, 2004), 25-28; Harrison writes that one must acknowledge the lasting ramifications of Romanizations on Crete. See G.W.M. Harrison, “Crete the Ordinary,” in *Post-Minoan Crete*, ed. W.G. Cavanagh and M. Curtis (London: British School at Athens, 1998), 129. Kaldellis writes that the island was mostly inhabited by Romans at the time of the conquest in 961. Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 A.D. to the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 35 and 145.

³⁷ Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 155-196; Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, “L'administration militaire de la Crète byzantine,” *Byzantion* 31 (1961): 217-228; E. Kountara-Galaki, “Crete and the Formation of the Isaurian Naval Administrative Network,” *Graeco-Arabica* 12 (2017): 97-128.

³⁸ For the first two centuries of Roman Crete see M.W. Baldwin Bowsky, “Roman Crete: No Provincial Backwater,” in *Πεπραγμένα του Ζ διεθνούς κρητολογικού συνεδρίου* vol. 1, ed. N.E. Papadogiannakis (Rethymno: Public Library of Rethymno, 1995), 33-67.

³⁹ Tsougarakis, “The Byzantine Seals of Crete,” in *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* vol. 2, ed. N. Oikonomides (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 137-152.

⁴⁰ Scholars of Roman Crete have used a wide variety of theoretical tools and bodies of evidence to understand what Kaldellis has plausibly called “Romanogenesis” – the emergence of a Roman ethnic group. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 114. Kouromenos, in a number of works, refers to the process of adopting a Roman way of life and identity as “emulative acculturation.” A. Kouromenos, *Cultural Identity and the Process of Emulative Acculturation: The View from the Domestic Realm in Roman Crete* (Forthcoming). Sweetman, who has likewise published much on this topic, understands the intentional adoption of elements of Roman culture through the theoretical framework of “globalization.” R.J. Sweetman, *The Mosaics of Roman Crete: Art, Archaeology, and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Kelly refers to the slow and uneven permeation of Roman customs throughout Crete as “Romanization.” A. Kelly, “Roman Bathhouses on Crete as Indicators of Cultural Transition: The Dynamics of Roman Influence,” in *Creating Ethnicities and Identities in the Roman World*, eds. A. Gardner, E. Herring, and K. Lomas (London: University of London Press), 131-67.

⁴¹ *The Life of Saint Nikolaos the Studite* 2; Genesios, *On the Reigns of Emperors* 2.10-12. In the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, who writes before the conquest of the island, says that a Roman commander “returned to the Roman country [*Ρωμανίαν*] and came as far as Crete.” Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia* 370.

of the Roman re-conquest in 961.⁴² Discussions of the ethnic identity of the population of Crete at the beginning of the ninth century should be done in terms of Romanness, since this is how the Cretans identified themselves and how they were acknowledged by others.

The extent to which Cretans preserved their ethnic identity – usually framed in terms of Greekness or “Byzantineness” by modern scholarship – during the Muslim period has received some scholarly attention. Several of these studies have focused on the maintenance of religious identity since this aspect of one’s identity is most observable, given the disproportional survival of religious texts and sources concerning Crete.⁴³ Scholarship has been generally divided as to the extent to which the Cretans maintained their preexisting identity or assimilated into the Muslim state. Some have argued that the Muslim conquest left Crete entirely without a Roman (again, usually referred to as Greek or Christian) population, which willingly adopted the identity of their Muslim rulers.⁴⁴ Some who take this view have emphasized that only through the violence of the initial conquest and the alleged forced conversion that followed was the Cretan-Roman population entirely subsumed by the Muslim conquerors.⁴⁵ The worst of these interpretations are fraught with disparaging notions of the Muslim conquerors and their religion. They refer to the Muslim period as an “occupation” and descriptions of this period are accompanied by language of oppression and religious persecution, which is not based on the literary or material record.⁴⁶ Likewise, many have understood the Cretan Muslim state as a “pirate’s nest,” denying its complexity and reducing it to

⁴² Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 1.81-82.

⁴³ For example, Voulgarakis, *Nikon Metanoieite und die Rechristianisierung der Kreter vom Islam*, 263.

⁴⁴ Jenkins, among other overstatements, writes that the Christian inhabitants of Crete very easily “merged” into Muslim society, by converting to Islam and intermarrying with the Muslims. Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 144. See also Treadgold, who writes of the conversion, expulsion, and enslavement of “most Cretans” with very little evidence cited. W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 254.

⁴⁵ Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle*, 32, 78, and 96; Shepard, *The Byzantine Re-conquest of Crete*, 1128.

⁴⁶ See, for example, K. Kalokyris, *The Byzantine Wall-Paintings of Crete* (New York: Red Dust, 1973).

a series of violent stereotypes in accordance with the Constantinopolitan sources.⁴⁷ All of this has contributed to a decidedly negative view of the relationship between the Muslim emirate of Crete and its Cretan Roman subjects.

This overly simplistic conception of the Muslim state and its treatment of the Cretan Romans has been rightly refuted. Scholars have convincingly argued that there is little reason to assume that the experience of Romans living in Muslim Crete was accompanied by continued violence and religious persecution.⁴⁸ Moreover, they have challenged a particular interpretation of an exaggerated account of the Muslim conquest that was used to support these claims of violent assimilation. The belief that the Muslims, upon arriving on Crete, left behind their own families in Alexandria and forcibly took Roman wives, comes from an overly literal reading of the tenth century historian Genesios. This passage of Genesios has been shown to be making classical and biblical allusions and is factually inconsistent with the rest of the narrative.⁴⁹ Finally, scholars have rejected the image of the Muslim emirate as a mere “pirate’s nest” that was incapable of anything more than raiding the Roman coastline.⁵⁰ Rather, the Cretan emirate appears to have been a complex and functional state. It maintained diplomatic relationships with the Romans and other

⁴⁷ Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), 279 and 308; Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle*, 33; Shepard, *The Byzantine Re-conquest of Crete*, 1123 et passim.

⁴⁸ Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, 108-114.

⁴⁹ Genesios, *On the Reigns of Emperors*, 2.10. Kaldellis, *Genesios: On the Reigns of Emperors*, 40 fn. 175. See also E.W. Brooks, “The Arab Occupation of Crete,” *EHR* 28 (1913), 431-443.

⁵⁰ The works of Christides are especially important in amending this view of Crete. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, throughout and especially 196-196. See also G.C. Miles, “Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area,” *DOP* 18 (1964): 13. Miles calls for a revision of the traditional view, in which Crete was characterized solely by its piracy. He advocates an alternative view, in which Crete is at the very least considered to be an intermediary in the exchange of culture and commodity.fc

Muslim states.⁵¹ It was known to have had flourishing judicial and literary traditions.⁵² Its economy was facilitated by a local monetary system with its coinage minted on the island.⁵³ In sum, there is not clear evidence to suggest that the Muslim period should be interpreted as the occupation of an oppressed peoples. There is very little evidence to suggest the wholesale conversion or destruction of the Cretan Roman population.

Other scholars have taken up a nearly opposite position on the persistence of Roman identity on Crete. They suggest that the Cretan-Roman population, on the whole, maintained its ethnic and religious identity throughout the approximately 130-year period of Muslim rule.⁵⁴ At times, these scholars have described Crete as though it was composed of two separate societies – one that was Muslim, and one that was “native” Cretan. This separation has been attributed to cultural and religious differences between Roman and Cretan Muslims, as well as the economic benefit of a large Christian population, which would pay a poll tax or *jizya*.⁵⁵ The Muslim state’s purported disinterest in associating with the local population supposedly manifested in infrequent social interactions and marriages between Muslim and Roman Cretans, a propensity for Cretan Muslims to live only in urban areas, primarily Chandax (modern-day Iraklio), and a lack of

⁵¹ For example, A certain Meliton is sent by the emperor to Crete in *The Life of Saint Theodore of Kythera* 5.1. See also, M. Canard and R. Mantran “Ikritish,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Brill, 2012). Two letters of the patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos are mistakenly attributed to communication with the emir of Crete. See Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letter 1 and 2*. Jenkins finds this address mistaken. See Jenkins, “The mission of St. Demetrianos of Cyprus to Bagdad,” *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 9 (1949): 267-275; “A Note on the ‘Letter to the Emir’ of Nicholas Mysticus,” *DOP* 17 (1963): 399-401.

⁵² For the scholarly tradition, see Canard “Ikritish.”

⁵³ Miles, *The Coinage of the Arab Amirs of Crete* (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1970), 14-15.

⁵⁴ Randazzo, in his preliminary investigation of the material record, suggests that “Byzantine” communities and culture would have been maintained except for the areas closest to Chandax, citing the economic benefits of a large Christian tax-paying population. Randazzo, *Archaeological Approaches to the Islamic Emirate of Crete*, 311-336.

⁵⁵ Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, 105. Christides suggest evidence for this can be derived from the example of Cretan controlled Naxos. Christides, “A Supplementary Investigation Tracing the Christians under the Shadow of Muslim Rule in the Emirate of Crete (ca 825/6-961 CE): the Case of the Treaty of Naxos in John Caminiates’ narration of the Sacking of Thessaloniki in 904 CE,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 99 (2018): 2. See Ioannes Kaminiates, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, 70.

religious conversion to Islam. According to this view, the combination of these circumstances resulted in conditions that were favorable to the preservation of the ethnic identity of “native” Cretans – meaning those who inhabited the island in the years before the Muslim conquest and their descendants. This position, which will be returned to below, has been accompanied by the assumption that Nikephoros Phokas’ expedition in 961 was viewed by the descendants of Cretan Romans as a long-awaited “liberation” by their Roman co-ethnics from their Muslim rulers. Most modern scholarship has understood the processes of ethnic change on Crete in terms of continuity of pre-existing identities.

While these scholars were certainly correct to point out that it is unlikely that the Cretan Roman population was forcibly “Arabized” or “Islamized” as some had claimed, underlying reasoning for ethnic continuity has also been undertheorized.⁵⁶ First, it is not evident that the differences between Muslim and Cretan Romans were sufficient to discourage fraternization and intermarriage. Although interfaith marriage may have been discouraged by both Christian and Islamic law, there are many examples of its occurrence in comparable situations, although none explicitly mentioned in the case of Crete.⁵⁷ Moreover, there was certainly conversion of Cretan

⁵⁶ Christides in a more recent work appears to recognize this and notes that “the gap between the Andalusian conquerors of Crete and the indigenous inhabitants of the island was not unbridgeable, in spite of the differences in language and religion.” Christides, “A supplementary investigation tracing the Christians under the Shadow of Muslim Rule in the Emirate of Crete (ca 825/6-961 CE): the Case of the Treaty of Naxos in John Caminiates’ narration of the Sacking of Thessaloniki in 904 CE,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 99 (2018): 1-14.

⁵⁷ For a handful of examples, see, N. Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 58-59; El-Cheikh, “Describing the Other to Get at the Self,” *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40.2. (1997): 239-250; Berto, *Christians and Muslims in Early Medieval Italy: Perceptions, Encounters, and Clashes* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 136; A.A. Eger, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 241-242. And, of course, there is the more famous example of the father of Digenes Akrites. T.M. Muhammad, “The Conversion from Islam to Christianity as Viewed by the Author of Digenes Akrites,” *CCO* 7 (2010): 121-149. A genetic study of Crete suggests limited demographic “impact” on the island’s population during the period of Muslim rule. This would not preclude other forms of social interaction between Cretan Romans and Muslims. See, P. Drineas et al., “Genetic History of the Population of Crete,” *Annals of Human Genetics* 83 (2019): 373-388.

Christians to Islam, as will be discussed further below.⁵⁸ Coincidentally, the Andalusian Muslims who conquered Crete were composed, in part, by Spanish Roman and Gothic Christians who had converted to Islam and became part of the Muslim community in Spain.⁵⁹ There is also some evidence to suggest that the Muslim population was not confined only to the city of Chandax and therefore social relationships could have occurred at a greater scope. The literary sources suggest that there were some Muslims who lived in the countryside around Chandax and in some of the mountainous parts of Crete.⁶⁰ The archaeological record for the ninth and tenth centuries has been neglected and remains understudied, but there is some evidence for Muslim settlements outside of Chandax.⁶¹ Moreover, the quantity and distribution of coins minted on the island suggests a greater degree of breadth and depth to the extent of the Muslim presence, as well as the faith of its subjects in its monetary system.⁶² In short, the notion that the Muslims and Romans were antagonistic towards one another should not be taken in an absolute sense, only a relative one. The Muslim state existed on Crete for over a century and had a broader reach than the capital of Chandax. The extent to which Cretan Romans retained aspects of their identity, and the reasons for this, remains to be determined.

Photios and his “Renegades”

⁵⁸ Crete specific examples are offered below, but for conversion in general, see R. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); “Conversion Stories in Early Islam,” *Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands: Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, eds. M. Gervers and R.J. Bikhazi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 123-133.

⁵⁹ Christides, *The Raids of the Moslems of Crete in the Aegean Sea*, 90.

⁶⁰ Leon the Deacon, *History* 1.4 and 1.7; Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 4.1-44. This also seems suggested in Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 249-250.

⁶¹ Most observable Muslim activity has been demonstrated in Iraklio, though an excavation at Vyzari in the mountains of central Crete has revealed Islamic coins and pottery. See again Randazzo, “Archaeological Approaches to the Islamic Emirate of Crete.” The evidence remains thin, but Islamic cultural material found in the hinterland of Chandax suggests changing settlement patterns or local interaction with Chandax. Randazzo, “Knossos and Heraklion in the Byzantine-Islamic Transition (late 7th – mid-10th century): An Archaeological Perspective into Shifting Patterns of Settlement Ruralisation and Urbanisation on Medieval Crete,” *Journal of Greek Archaeology* 5 (2020): 448-467.

⁶² Miles, *The Coinage of the Arab Amirs of Crete*.

Perhaps the clearest evidence for the assimilation of Romans into the Muslim emirate of Crete is the example of the admiral Photios, whose career is attested in the *Life of Basileios*.⁶³ Photios, whose name suggests a Roman origin, was active in the late 9th century and served as an admiral for the Cretan emir Shu'ayb ibn Umar (called Σαῆτ by the Romans), son of the founder of the emirate, Abu Hafs Umar (called Ἀπόχαψς by the Romans).⁶⁴ The author does not indicate if Photios was born on Crete or if he was enslaved and brought to the island later. In either case, the lofty position with which Photios was entrusted indicates that he must have spent much of his adult life on Crete. The *Life of Basileios* names Photios as the leader of a large Cretan fleet which undertook a series of raids along the Aegean coastline. The text first introduces him as a “man of war and action” and “accomplice” of the Cretan emir. It then reports that the attacks of Photios and his fleet reached as far as the island of Prokonnesos (modern day Marmara) in the Hellespont. Photios was finally defeated and killed by the admiral Niketas Ooryphas in 873, after a series of engagements in the Aegean and off the western coast of the Peloponnese.

This short outline is all that is known of Photios, but his career reveals the experience of some Cretan Romans under the Muslim emirate and of Roman perceptions of those who had formerly lived within the boundaries of their state. This is evident in the description of the final defeat of Photios and his navy as recounted in the *Life of Basileios*:

“Of the barbarians, he slew some by the sword and sent others to the bottom; and he slaughtered their leader [Photios] and forced the survivors to scatter all over the peninsula. Niketas later trapped them, took them alive and subjected them to various torments. Some he had skinned, especially those who had abjured their Christian baptism, saying that it was this very thing <, the baptism,> that he was taking off them and nothing that was their own; from others, he had skin flayed off in strips from head to toe, <causing them> excruciating pain. Others again, he would lift by means of crane-like contraptions and then

⁶³ *Life of Basileios* 60-61.

⁶⁴ For the Cretan emirs, see Miles, “A Provisional Reconstruction of the Genealogy of the Arab Amirs of Crete,” *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 15-16 (1963): 59-73.

forcibly throw from on high cauldrons filled with bubbling pitch to give them a share - so he said - of their own “baptism” full of darkness and pain.⁶⁵

In this passage, the author distinguishes between two opponents. On the one hand, there were the Romans, whose dominions were elsewhere described as being threatened by the Cretan fleet and whose state was secured by their eventual victory. On the other hand, there were the “barbarians,” whom the author also referred to as the “Cretans.” The author then further divides these barbarians, assigning “penalties commensurate with their deeds.” There were those who had long been believers in Islam and those who apparently had been Christians until more recently.

The author, in differentiating between these two components of the Cretan fleet, is likely acknowledging the presence of the descendants of Christian Romans, such as Photios, and contrasting them with the Cretan Muslim sailors. In this instance, the descendants of Cretan Romans were conceived of as a third group participating in this conflict. The author recognizes that Photios and the other former Christians were distinct from those in the rest of the Muslim fleet, and he places them squarely under the label of barbarian. According to the author, Photios and the others converts to Islam had some sort of observable traits – though what these may have been was not made explicit – that marked them as distinct from both their Muslim counterparts and the Romans. The author distinguishes between the two groups of barbarians on account of the amount of time which they were assumed to have practiced Islam. There is no indication offered as to how Ooryphas and the Romans, or perhaps simply the author of the text, could have possibly identified those who were life-long Muslims from those who were a more recent converts, nor can it be certain that they did so accurately.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the author believes that it was possible for Ooryphas to make such a distinction, and he interprets those like Photios as barbarians.

⁶⁵ *Life of Basileios* 61. Skylitzes includes essentially the same story in *Synopsis of Histories* 153-154.

⁶⁶ Voulgarakis, *Nikon Metanoieite und die Rechristianisierung der Kreter vom Islam*, 202-203.

Most of the author's attention was focused on the abjuration (ἀρνέομαι) of Christian baptism by Photios and some of the other Cretan sailors. Baptism is among the characteristics that Roman authors could use to differentiate the Romans from other groups.⁶⁷ Apparently, Niketas Ooryphas and his soldiers identified and harmed with particular attention those whom they believed had renounced this baptism and accepted a non-Christian faith. The punishments given to these specific members of the fleet are a direct result of how the Roman soldiers understood their religious affiliation. It is suggested that Niketas Ooryphas, in punishing these specific individuals, was "taking off (ἀφαιρέω)" the remnants of baptism from those who had rejected it. He also humiliated others with mock baptisms, though which particular group of Cretans he was targeting, if any, is ambiguous. At the very least, Niketas Ooryphas' actions and the author's language were especially charged in response to the presence of a number of Cretan sailors who, like Photios, were the descendants of Romans and their perceived abandonment of Christianity was the reason for the contempt they received.

The author of the *Life of Basileios* described Photios and his companions as though they were renegades, individuals who denied their own religion, accepted a new one, and turned against their former co-religionists. For the most part, modern scholarship has followed this same interpretation, categorizing these individuals as defectors from their own society and culture, rather than as active participants in the society in which they actually lived.⁶⁸ Such individuals then become exceptional in their conversion to Islam and their relationship with the Cretan emirate, and are treated more as individual actors and opportunists, rather than as members of Cretan Muslim society. However, the author of the *Life of Basileios* did not capture this account from the

⁶⁷ See, for example, the discussion in Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 7-9.

⁶⁸ Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 50; For "a renegade, probably accompanied by other renegades" see Canard "Ikritish." For a brief discussion of how such labels obscure the historical narrative, see J. Osgood, *Caesar's Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 185.

perspective of Photios and the other former Christians. Rather, he offers a moralizing tale that shows the superiority of the Romans and their religion, in contrast to the Muslim sailors and those whom he believed to be apostates. If the context in which Photios and the other converts lived is taken into consideration and placed alongside analogous examples, they appear less like individuals who were acting antagonistically toward their Roman identity and more like the descendants of Cretan Romans who became, or were on the way to becoming, full members of Cretan Muslim society.

The members of Photios' fleet are the only reference to the descendants of Romans occupying important positions in the Muslim state on Crete. Nor is anything else known about Photios and his companions other than what is recorded in the *Life of Basileios*. However, there are other individuals of a similar background to Photios, who have likewise been defined by the limiting categories of apostate and "renegade," and their example provides a better understanding of the experience of Photios and his companions under the Cretan emirate.⁶⁹ Leon Tripolites, for example, was a sailor from the town of Attaleia (modern Antalya) in the Kibyrraiotai theme, who was captured by a Muslim raid probably in the late ninth century.⁷⁰ Leon was freed from his servitude by converting to Islam and subsequently enrolled in the Abbasid military. He is best known for being among the leaders of the Muslim navy that sacked Thessaloniki in 904 and for

⁶⁹ Others have recognized the importance of such individuals, though again usually referring to them as some variation of renegade. F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 201; Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 466; W. Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 274. Roman sources describe these individuals much the same. Ioannes Kaminiates, *The Capture of Thessaloniki* 24; Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 182; Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letter* 23.

⁷⁰ Leon is most often referred with the sobriquet Tripolites (of Tripoli), for the name of the place in which he was freed and eventually would serve as governor. He is also called Leon Attaleos by Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 182; For his career, see W.A. Farag, "Some Remarks on Leo of Tripoli's Attack on Thessaloniki in 904 A.D.," *ByzZ* 82.1-2 (1989): 133-139; R.K. Odettallah, "Leo Tripolites - Ghulām Zurāfa and the Sack of Thessaloniki in 904," *ByzSlav* 56 (1995): 97-102; A.A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* II.1, 163.

being defeated by the Roman admiral Ioannes Radenos in 921.⁷¹ Likewise, Damianos, who was mistakenly called the emir of Tyre in the Roman sources, converted to Islam and found opportunity in the Muslim world.⁷² He is referred to as “ar-Rumi,” or “the Roman,” by Arabic writers.⁷³ Damianos was the leader of a large Muslim fleet that sacked the town of Demetrias in 901 with the help of Leon, and he defeated the admiral Himerios off the coast of Chios in 912.⁷⁴ Damianos and Leon, like Photios and the other members of the Cretan fleet, were recognized as ethnic Romans who converted from Christianity and served in important positions in their respective Muslim states.

The careers of Leon and Damianos, which are better attested in both Roman and Arabic sources, can inform what little is known of Photios. Based upon the evidence of Leon and Damianos, Photios probably held other positions in the military and perhaps even the administration of the emirate, before being made admiral of the fleet sent against the Romans in the early 870s. The Muslim sources add that Leon served as a governor of Tripoli and later of Tarsos, which was also managed by Damianos for a brief period towards the end of the ninth century.⁷⁵ Roman sources acknowledge that Photios was a successful admiral, but it is also likely that he was respected by contemporary Cretan Muslims. Leon, for example, was praised for the rewards given to his soldiers after the sack of Attaleia.⁷⁶ After his governorship, Damianos advised the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu’tadid and later served as a general for his son Caliph Al-Muktafi,

⁷¹ Ioannes Kaminiates, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, 24-25. See his defeat near Lemnos in Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories*, 182-183 and 218; Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letter* 23.

⁷² Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 202.

⁷³ See Euty chius (Sa’id ibn Batriq), the Melkite bishop of Alexandria in the tenth century, in A.A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* II.2, 26.

⁷⁴ For Demetrias, see Jenkins “The Chronological Accuracy of the ‘Logothete’ for the Years A. D. 867-913,” *DOP* 19 (1965): 107. Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 191 for the defeat of Himerios.

⁷⁵ Odetallah, “Leo Tripolites - Ghulām Zurāfa and the Sack of Thessaloniki in 904.” For Damianos, see *The History of al-Tabarī* XXXVIII 34.

⁷⁶ *The History of al-Tabarī* XXXVIII 148.

against the Tulunids in Egypt.⁷⁷ Contemporary Arabic historians favorably portray both Leon and Damianos. While the Roman name of Photios is recorded, he probably would have received an Arabic name or sobriquet as well. Leon was known as Rasiq al-Wardami and Lawi Abu'l-Harith gulam Zurafa, and Damianos' name was transcribed into Arabic as Damyāna.⁷⁸ The Roman sources record only the name of Photios, the conversion of members of the his fleet to Islam, and a brief moment of his career, but the example of Leon and Damianos suggests that he was more integrated into the society of the Cretan emirate than the sources were aware of. He too likely received an Arabic name, served in a number of capacities within the emirate, and was accepted as influential member of Cretan Muslim society. In other words, the Roman sources likely did not capture the ways in which Photios would have adopted aspects of Muslim culture and integrated into the society of the Cretan emirate. The other descendants of Romans in the Cretan fleet, who were not prominent enough to be recorded in the *Life of Basileios*, should also be reconsidered in light of what is known of Leon and Damianos.

Little else is known about the background of Photios and the other converts in the Cretan fleet, but some additional information may be surmised from the chronological context. The careers of these sailors took place approximately 40 years after the arrival of Muslim rule on Crete and so, for any who were born on the island, it is likely that they had spent the majority of their lives under the emirate and had little experience of Roman rule. It is also possible that Photios and his companions, or at least some of them, were emancipated slaves, either originally from Crete or brought to the island from elsewhere. Roman sources claim that the Muslims enslaved Cretan

⁷⁷ *The History of al-Ṭabarī* XXXVIII 91 and 151.

⁷⁸ Farag suggests that Rasiq al-Wardami could instead be another servant of Zurafa: *Some Remarks on Leo of Tripoli's Attack on Thessaloniki in 904 A.D.*, 135. For Damianos, see *The History of al-Ṭabarī* XXXVIII 141.

Romans and those from nearby islands.⁷⁹ There are also many references to Romans being captured by the Cretan emirate, though many of these sources discuss Romans being sold to other parts of the Muslim world or returned to the Romans in exchange for Muslim prisoners.⁸⁰ The process of manumission often resulted in strong links between emancipated slaves and their owners.⁸¹ Leon and Damianos, for example, were manumitted slaves and the sources at times refer to them to as ghulām Zurāfa and ghulām Yāzmān, respectively, signifying their relationship with their patrons. *Gulam* is a rather flexible term that can mean slave, personal servant, and even apprentice.⁸² Muslim patrons generally formed close relationships with their manumitted slaves, often leading to an intense loyalty between the two parties and the introduction of the emancipated into the society and social circles of the patron.⁸³ It is also probable that any Romans who would eventually perform military service in the emirate were enslaved as youths.⁸⁴ The time that Photios and the other descendants of Romans on Crete spent under the rule of the emirate, as well as their military service and, potentially, their manumission, suggests that their actions were not reactionary responses against their affiliation with the Roman ethnic community. Instead, they should be understood as individuals who actively and willingly identified as members of Cretan Muslim society.

The *Life of Basileios* provides some vague indication of the size of the Cretan fleet, but the author does not provide an exact count, nor does he give an estimation as to what proportion of these sailors he understood to be converts to Islam. He mentions that the initial fleet was composed

⁷⁹ See above footnote 4. See also the *Life of Saint Petros of Argos* 9. Vasiliev, “The Life of St. Peter of Argos and its Historical Significance,” *Traditio* 5 (1947): 163-190.

⁸⁰ Kaminiates, *The Capture of Thessaloniki* 74 records an example of this.

⁸¹ See discussion in D. Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 89-93.

⁸² Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*, 95.

⁸³ Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*, 185-188.

⁸⁴ Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*, 7-9.

of approximately 27 *kombaria* and “a large number of light boats and fifty-oared ships that the common folk usually call *saktourai* and galleys (*galeai*).”⁸⁵ *Kombaria* is a Greek transliteration of the Arabic *qunbar*, which Leon VI calls “large and slow” in his *Naumachia*.⁸⁶ The *Life of Basileios* uses *Saktourai* and *galeai* interchangeably, and these refer to a smaller ship often used for scouting, but also capable for use in combat.⁸⁷ *Saktourai* may also have been a transliteration of a type of Muslim vessel.⁸⁸ Regardless, the *Life of Basileios* often inflates the number of enemies in order to increase the accomplishments of the Romans and the renown of the emperor. The sense is simply that Photios’ fleet was large and composed of numerous Cretans, both of Muslim and Roman descent. It is notable that already in the second generation of Muslim rule on Crete the descendants of Romans participated in the Muslim state and were converting from Christianity to Islam, and that they did so to such an extent that it was noticed by the sources.

In sum, it was possible for Romans to assimilate into the Cretan emirate. Photios and his companions not only provide evidence for the acceptance of Islam among the descendants of Romans on Crete, but also for the willingness to serve in the emirate and for the emirate to accept their service. The extant evidence comes from late in the second generation of Muslim rule, but there is no reason to think that the emirate ceased to integrate Romans into its society after this period or that it only began to do so with Photios. The names and careers of any such figures have simply not been passed down. Through their conversion and entrance into military service the

⁸⁵ *The Life of Basileios* 60. Skylitzes gives a slightly different account of the Cretan fleet. Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 152.

⁸⁶ For the edition and translation of Leon VI’s *Naumachia*, see the second appendix of J. Pryor and E.M. Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ: The Byzantine Navy ca 500-1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 512-513. For the *qunbar*, see M. Gil, “Shipping in the Mediterranean in the Eleventh Century A.D. as Reflected in Documents from the Cairo Geniza,” *JNES* 67.4 (2008): 255-256.

⁸⁷ Pryor, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ*, 190, 382-384.

⁸⁸ Called the *shakhtur* in Arabic. Pryor, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ*, xlv; Gil, *Shipping in the Mediterranean in the Eleventh Century A.D. as Reflected in Documents from the Cairo Geniza*, 257. Glykatzis-Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer: La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe- XV^e siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 414.

descendants of Romans were able to achieve higher positions than might have otherwise been possible. Photios and his sailors should not be understood as exceptional, but as representative of others undergoing a process of assimilation that was most tangibly observed through religious change and allegiance to the Cretan emirate, but likely manifested in other ways that the sources do not preserve.

Saint Nikon and the “Cretans”:

After the defeat of Photios and his fleet in the 870s, references to the internal history of the island become rather sparse until the later part of the tenth century, when the attention of Roman authors turned to the island after its conquest by Nikephoros Phokas in 961. One of these sources, the *Life of Saint Nikon*, is particularly important in understanding the persistence of Roman identity on Crete and how the descendants of Cretan Romans could be perceived by some Roman observers. Nikon was an ascetic monk who was active for much of the tenth century. He is best known for his many travels throughout Crete and the Peloponnese, as well as for his near constant preaching, for which he was given the nickname the “Metanoete,” or, “Repent ye!” The author of the *Life*, who wrote in the middle of the eleventh century, attests that the saint came to Crete after he was called by a “divine will” and “recognized that it was necessary” to sail to the island soon after its reconquest.⁸⁹ His account of Nikon’s time on Crete and his interactions with the inhabitants of the island resonate with some of the findings of the previous case study. According to the hagiographer, Nikon encountered many who were presumably the descendants of Romans and who no longer maintained some of the characteristics often associated with being Roman, namely,

⁸⁹ Sullivan suggests that the author, an abbot of Nikon’s monastery in Sparta, completed the *Life* in year 1042 and may have known the saint personally. See D.F. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline: Hellenic College Press, 1987), 7.

they no longer practiced the Roman religion and Roman customs on account of their close relationships with Cretan Muslims.

The hagiographer introduces his account of Nikon on Crete by first relating the religious situation on the island in the aftermath of Muslim rule. He states that, “the island still bore traces of the vile superstition of the [Hagarenes], since its inhabitants, by time and long fellowship with the Saracens, alas!, were led astray to their customs and foul and unhallowed rites.”⁹⁰ The hagiographer indicates that those whom Nikon encountered, whom are elsewhere called Cretans, were followers of the Islamic religion.⁹¹ He refers to Islam as a *kakopistias*, essentially meaning a faith that is bad or false. It is important to note whom exactly the author of the *Life* has in mind in this discussion. The hagiographer clearly distinguishes between two groups when writing about the inhabitants of Crete. On the one hand, there were the Cretan Muslims, whom he calls “Saracens” and “Hagarenes.” He speaks of this group as though it no longer existed on the island at the time of the writing of this text. On the other hand, there was a second group called the “Cretans,” who currently inhabited the island at the time of this *Life*’s composition and whom the author considers distinct from the Muslims. The statement that this population had long been present on the island and had been “led astray” suggests that the authors is thinking of the descendants of Romans.

The hagiographer, in part, distinguishes between “Cretans” and “Hagarenes” based on how recently he believed that they had come to practice Islam. This is similar to how the *Life of Basileios* differentiated between the two groups of captives from Photios’ navy a century earlier. He claims that the inhabitants of Crete had become accustomed to rites (ὁργίους) that were not previously their own on account of the presence of Cretan Muslims. The verb that the hagiographer

⁹⁰ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.12-16.

⁹¹ They are called Cretans throughout, see, for example, *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.51.

uses to describe this change is συναπάγω, which literally means “to be carried away with,” but can also have the sense of being seduced by, conforming to, or even coming to identify with. Elsewhere in the text, the hagiographer explains to his audience that the saint met Cretans who “were already converted, as our story has made clear, to the superstitious error of the heathens.”⁹² Here the hagiographer uses the verb προκαταλαμβάνω, suggesting that they were “won over” by the religion of the Cretan Muslims. The impression that the hagiographer leaves of the religious landscape of Crete is that it was filled with the presence of Christian converts.

The *Life of Saint Nikon* indicates an additional way in which the inhabitants of Crete were perceived to have changed during the period of Muslim rule. The author states that the Cretans had not only ceased to follow the Roman religion during their long separation from the rest of the Roman world, but they had also come to adopt Muslim customs. According to the *Life*, the Cretans were “carried away” to the *ethos* of the “Saracens.” *Ethos* means one’s customs, manners, or essentially “way of life” and it was often a defining characteristic that Romans employed to distinguish themselves from others.⁹³ In fact, this how Theophanes Continuatus and Genesios distinguish between the Roman and non-Roman inhabitants of Crete at the time of the Muslim conquest and, apparently, for some time afterwards. Theophanes Continuatus, expanding slightly upon what Genesios writes of Crete, states that of the 29 cities captured “one alone remained from that time impregnable and unscathed; even if subjected in word, it nevertheless preserved its customs (τὰ ἑαυτῶν δὲ ἔθιμα) and Christian religion intact.”⁹⁴ The text claims that only one city

⁹² *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.21-23.

⁹³ Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 46-49 and 81-83.

⁹⁴ Genesios, *On the Reigns of Emperors* 2.10. Theophanes Continuatus 78 adds the preservation of the city’s customs in addition to its religion. Tsougarakis suggests that Genesios may have the city of Eleutherna, south of modern Rethymno, in mind. It is not possible to gauge the historicity of this claim, though many have accepted it uncritically. Analogous examples do exist in Sicily. See Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, 34. On Theophanes Continuatus’ relationship with Genesios’ work and a shared source between them, see C. Zuckerman, “Emperor Theophilos and Theophobos in Three Tenth-Century Chronicles: Discovering the Common Source,” *REByz* 75 (2017): 101-150.

retained its Roman customs and religion intact, while the remainder changed to a various degree that the text does not estimate. Both the *Life of Saint Nikon* and Theophanes Continuatus believed that many of the descendants of Romans had become like the Muslim newcomers in respect to their customs, or at least partially so.

The author of the *Life* provides his own interpretation as to how the Cretans had come to differ in these important indicators of Romanness. He attributes this development to a combination of the passage of time, presumably since the separation of Crete from Roman rule, and of their “long fellowship” with the Cretan Muslims. By the time of the Roman re-conquest of Crete in 961, it had been approximately 130 years since the establishment of the Muslim state on Crete. It is unlikely that any of those whom Nikon encountered had any recollection of life on Roman Crete, nor is it clear how much Roman onlookers knew about the people of the island. In addition to the length of time, the author of the *Life* offers the “long fellowship (ξυνανλία) with the Saracens” as a reason that the Cretan-Romans adopted Muslim customs and rites. This term has the literal definition of dwelling together but can also be used to refer to cohabitation and marriage. The Roman historian Michael Attaleiates uses this same term to explain how the supposed Iberian ancestors of Nikephoros Phokas became Romans. He states that the Iberians became “autochthonous based on their grafting onto Rome and their cohabitation (συνανλίας).”⁹⁵ The *Life* mentions the passage of time separated from the rest of the Roman world and the close association with Muslims as further differentiating the Cretans from other Romans.

Although the author of the *Life* notes some of the ways in which the Cretans had come to identify with the religion and customs of the Muslims, he does not state directly whether he believed the Cretans had entirely ceased to be Romans or if he considered them to be Romans

⁹⁵ Michael Attaleiates, *History* 28.1.

again by the time of writing in the middle of the eleventh century. The author certainly seems to place himself among the Romans, mentioning that Crete had been “preserved for the Roman empire” and elsewhere lamenting the murder of the emperor Nikephoros Phokas, “who wielded the scepter of the Romans.”⁹⁶ Most of the hagiographer’s attention was on the religious identity of the Cretans and the saint’s mission of proselytization, and therefore he does not frame the discussion in terms of Romanness.

However, there is some evidence to suggest that the author, when reflecting on the inhabitants of late tenth century Crete, did not unproblematically consider this group to be a full member of the community of Romans. He states that the Cretans initially found Nikon’s message of repentance to be “strange (ἄλλοκότῳ)” and “foreign (ξένῳ).”⁹⁷ He again repeats shortly after that the Cretans were inflamed by the “strangeness (καινόν)” and “unusualness (ἁσύνηθες)” of his message.⁹⁸ This statement is likely a rhetorical device intended to emphasize the difficulty of the saint’s efforts on Crete. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the author presented the Cretans to his Roman audience as a group that resisted the teaching of Christianity on account of its foreignness.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the hagiographer compares the saint’s interactions with the Cretans to the meeting of Christ and the Samaritan woman.¹⁰⁰ This allusion “otherizes” the Cretans by putting them in the place of the Samaritan woman, who is distinguished in this Biblical passage by her ethnic and religious differences, but who also comes around to recognize Christ – perhaps a useful model for interpreting the Cretan experience.¹⁰¹ The author is not as explicit as the *Life of Basileios* in referring to the descendants of Cretan Romans as barbarians, but they are likewise distinguished

⁹⁶ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.6-8 (preserved for the Roman empire); 2.11-15 (on Nikephoros Phokas).

⁹⁷ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.17-18.

⁹⁸ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.20-21.

⁹⁹ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.36-39; On Roman audiences of hagiographies, see F. Curta, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, c. 500 to 1050: The Early Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 295.

¹⁰⁰ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.36-39 and 21.25-3.1.

¹⁰¹ For this church, see A.M. Talbot and A. Kazhdan, “The Byzantine Cult of St. Photeine,” *ByzF* 20 (1994): 103-112.

from the island's Muslim inhabitants and made distinct from contemporary Romans, specifically due to their adoption of Arabic customs and religion. They existed as a third group, though what qualities the hagiographer saw to distinguish them from the other Muslims beyond the historical memory of Roman Crete is left unstated.

Scholars have disagreed on the extent to which the *Life of Saint Nikon* is indicative of the formation of a population of converts or *mawali*. Again, the various interpretations have been marked by an intense polarity concerning the engagement of Greek-speaking Cretans with their Muslim counterparts. Scholars have made claims for complete religious change among the inhabitants of Crete or for the minor correction of Christian beliefs that had been influenced by Islam.¹⁰² There is likely some reality to the idea that the Cretans' alignment with Orthodox Christianity would have been suspect to the author of the *Life*. Veiled indications of this may appear when the hagiographer refers to some Cretans "whom [Nikon] knew to be different from others in their knowledge and acceptance of good."¹⁰³ These Cretans were apparently more accepting of the saint's message, were willing to help promote Christianity, and helped to spread the reputation of the saint. Moreover, there is some evidence for the preservation and even embellishment of churches during the Muslim period of rule, further demonstrating the continuity of Christian worship on Crete.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the *Life's* view of Crete's religious landscape does not preclude many Cretans from having maintained aspects of their preexisting identities – in whatever terms one understands this.

Moreover, the account of Nikon's time on Crete is filled with exaggerations and does not entirely capture the reality of the religious situation of the island. Its first mentions of the Cretans

¹⁰² See discussion in Voulgarakis, "Nikon Metanoite und die Rechristianisierung der Kreter vom Islam," 199-200.

¹⁰³ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.33-35.

¹⁰⁴ S.N. Christodoulakis, "Η Εκκλησία της Κρήτης κατά την Αραβοκρατία (824-961 μ.Χ.)," *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011): 51-71.

treat the entire group as though they had all experienced the same changes in religion and customs. The author states that after the saint's initial preaching, the Cretans "made known his deeds throughout the entire island" and that "all then flocked to him."¹⁰⁵ The language is certainly overstated and intended to inflate the achievements of the saint. The author describes how Nikon faced resistance from the Cretans, "who violently opposed the man, wishing to destroy him."¹⁰⁶ His efforts are made all the more impressive since the author makes it seem as if the entirety of the island was opposed to the saint and his teachings, but was later convinced by him. The hagiographer's purpose was to promote the success of Nikon, more than to provide an accurate depiction of the Muslim population of Crete,

However, the likelihood that Nikon encountered the descendants of Cretan Romans who converted to Islam, or were influenced by its religious practices and traditions, should not be dismissed out of hand. Recall that Genesios and the continuator of Theophanes claim that only one of the cities of Crete remained free in its religious practices. Theophanes Continuatus adds to this that "it was in such wise and at this time that the Cretans were snatched away from the midst of the Christians."¹⁰⁷ The tenth century historian Leon the Deacon expresses a sentiment similar to that recorded in the *Life of Saint Nikon*. He writes that "the Cretans are said to be addicted to divination, ribaldry, and wrongful beliefs, which they learned of old from the Manichaeans and from Muhammad."¹⁰⁸ Leon places this explanation in the present tense, indicating the author's perception of the Cretans in the years following the re-conquest. Of course, there is also the example of Photios and the Cretan converts discussed above. In the fourteenth century, Al-Nuwayri

¹⁰⁵ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.50-54.

¹⁰⁶ *Life of Saint Nikon* 20.19-20.

¹⁰⁷ Theophanes Continuatus 78. See again the *Life of Saint Nikolaos the Studite* 2, in which the Muslims are called an "ignorant *ethnos*."

¹⁰⁸ Leon the Deacon *History*, 2.6.

relates a story of how, after the reconquest, the Roman emperor tricked the Muslims of Crete into entering Constantinople, where they were held until they converted to Christianity, causing each generation to slowly forget Islam.¹⁰⁹ In the twelfth century, Ibn Jubayr reminisced on the island's Muslim inhabitants.¹¹⁰ There are a number of reasons that would have encouraged the descendants of Cretan Romans to convert to Islam, including the avoidance of the *jizya* (an extra tax levied specifically against non-Islamic religious groups), the opportunity for improved social standing, and the possibility of intermarriage.¹¹¹ This is not to say that the primary sources (and some modern scholars) are right to suggest that the entirety of the Roman population converted to Islam. Each of these sources has its own reasoning for such exaggeration and this conclusion would not be in keeping with other analogous examples. Rather, this evidence suggests that some, and perhaps many, did not maintain their Roman religious identity but converted to Islam or adapted minor Islamic religious practices to an extent that is observable in the literary material.

Lastly, the geographical extent of Nikon's career provides some indication of the range in which these communities could have developed. While there has been a tendency to confine the Muslim population to the area around Chandax, the *Life of Saint Nikon* states that "he built many churches over all the island and created priests and deacons and church guardians and other officials."¹¹² This statement that Nikon went throughout the entirety of Crete is likewise overstated, but the hagiographer indicates that part of Nikon's activity took place near the former bishopric of Gortyna, located in the southern part of Crete.¹¹³ The details are rather vague on where exactly the

¹⁰⁹ See M. Gaspar, "Cordobeses Musulmanes en Alejandria y Creta," in *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera* (Zaragoza: Mariano Escar, 1904), 227-228.

¹¹⁰ *The Travels of ibn Jubayr* 359.

¹¹¹ Scholars often point to these factors, among others. See, for example, U. Simonsohn, "Conversion, Exemption, and Manipulation: Social Benefits and Conversion to Islam in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *Medieval Worlds* 6 (2017): 196-216.

¹¹² *Life of Saint Nikon*, 21.4-6.

¹¹³ *Life of Saint Nikon* 21.9-10.

saint travelled and where his churches are located, but the sense of this passage is that St. Nikon's activities were not strictly limited to Chandax. Another hagiography, the *Life of Saint Ioannes Xenos*, describes an even more ambitious building project in western Crete, about 50 years after Nikon's time on the island.¹¹⁴ It has been argued that the series of monastic communities built and organized by Ioannes Xenos was part of an initiative to serve the religious needs of a growing Christian community in western Crete – though this is attributed more to the need for a new ecclesiastical infrastructure rather than to account for the newly converted Christians.¹¹⁵ The sources, though vague, indicate that religious change occurred in other parts of Crete and not just in the center of Muslim activity on the island.

An examination of the *Life of Saint Nikon* does provide a clear sense of how many of the descendants of Cretan Romans converted to Islam or came to identify with their Muslim counterparts. The argument for near complete religious continuity and that for complete conversion to Islam seem equally untenable and it is likely that the reality is located somewhere between these two extremes.¹¹⁶ However, this text, in conjunction with a few others, demonstrates Roman attitudes towards the people of Crete. The perception of contemporary Romans sources is that much of this population had strayed from Romanness because they ceased to maintain their previous religion and customs. Some consider this separation a result of force on the part of the Muslims, while the *Life* attributes this to the passage of time and the relationship developed between Romans and Muslims on Crete. In either case, the people of Crete did not easily fit under

¹¹⁴ See the *Life of Saint Ioannes Xenos*.

¹¹⁵ S. Oikonomou, "John Xenos as Serial Founder of Monastic Establishments," *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries*, ed. M. Mullet (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 2007). The bishoprics of Arion and Kalamon, neither of which are attested before 961, both assisted Ioannes Xenos in his endeavors.

¹¹⁶ See again Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*.

the label of Roman or under the label of Muslim in the Roman sources, who signal only to a shared Roman past connecting the Cretans to the broader Roman ethnic community.

The Narratives of the Roman Reconquest:

The various narratives of the re-conquest of Crete in 961 by Nikephoros Phokas demonstrate how the inhabitants of the islands are perceived in the Roman sources. Some modern scholars have portrayed the Roman conquest of Crete as a “liberation” not just of the island, but of the Cretan people.¹¹⁷ This understanding is frequently accompanied by the language of an “occupation,” in which the Cretan Romans eagerly awaited the return of Roman rule and the removal of the Muslims. Inherent in this view is an assumption that both the arriving army and the people of Crete viewed themselves as part of the same group, with the Cretans only temporarily separated from that group. This characterization would have important implications for our understanding of ethnic identity on Crete if it was accepted. It would indicate that the Romans – whether it be the authors, audience, or state – continued to consider the Cretans as part of a larger community of Romans over the course of more than a century apart. It would also suggest that the Cretans likewise shared this understanding and that their affiliation with the Roman state persisted. The previous case studies have already cast doubt on the likelihood that descendants of Cretan Romans remained unambiguously Roman in the eyes of contemporary sources and has provided evidence that some had assimilated, or started to assimilate, into the Muslim emirate. The three

¹¹⁷ See, for example, G. Tserevelakis, *Ο Νικηφόρος Φωκάς και η απελευθέρωση της Κρήτης από τους Άραβες (961 μ.Χ.): Θεοδοσίου του Διακόνου “Αλώσης της Κρήτης”* (Athens: Stamoulis SA, 2009); V. Laurent, “Le statut de la Crète byzantine avant et après sa libération du joug arabe (961),” *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 15-16 (1961-1962): 382-396; Voulgarakis, *Nikon Metanoite und die Rechristianisierung der Kreter vom Islam*, 192 et passim. In contrast, Randazzo questions the historicity of a liberation primarily based upon the archaeological evidence and in response to modern romanticization of this event. See, Randazzo, “Nikephoros Phokas and the Byzantine *Reconquista* of the Islamic Emirate of Crete (961 AD). An Alternative View,” *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum* 18 (2024): 141-160.

narratives discussed below reject the notion that either the Roman army or Cretan populace viewed this expedition as a liberation.

Of the contemporary narratives, only a tenth century continuation of the *Chronicle* of Symeon references liberation as a possible motivation for the expedition against Crete. This work is a revision and extension of the *Chronicle* of Symeon, which begins at creation and ends with the death of Romanos I Lekapenos in 948. The continuation is preserved in a number of abridgements, but the version in book 6 of Theophanes Continuatus includes some of this language of liberation in describing the re-conquest.¹¹⁸ In his account, the author depicts a “deliberation scene,” in which the *parakoimomenos* Ioseph Bringas convinced the emperor Romanos II to prepare an expedition against the island of Crete against the will of the senate, which was concerned by the costs and dangers of such an endeavor. Ioseph argued in favor of the attempt to re-conquer Crete by reminding Romanos of the misfortunes that had befallen the Romans and by stating that “it is just to reckon up the slaughters and the rape of virgins and the destruction of churches and the captives taken from the maritime themes, and it is appropriate to fight for Christians and kindred.”¹¹⁹ The first part of his argument proposes that Romanos should consider the protection of the Romans who lived on the coastlines of the Aegean in making his decision. But the latter part appears to express solidarity with the inhabitants of Crete, not only as fellow Christians, but as fellow Romans (ὁμοφύλων).

This particular version of the continuation is modelled upon the account of Justinian’s re-conquest of North Africa as recorded by the sixth century historian Prokopios.¹²⁰ The author

¹¹⁸ Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 203-217, esp. 211 fn. 51; A. Markopoulos, *History and Literature of Byzantium in the 9th-10th Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), V.

¹¹⁹ Theophanes Continuatus 475.

¹²⁰ Kaldellis, “The Byzantine Conquest of Crete (961 AD), Prokopios’ Vandal War, and the Continuator of the Chronicle of Symeon,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 39.2 (2015): 302–311.

employs much of the same language and narrative as Prokopios, including the deliberation scene mentioned above. Prokopios' account, in part, frames the expedition of Justinian as the liberation of Roman subjects from their Vandal rulers.¹²¹ The author of the continuation then may have employed this model because he similarly viewed the Roman re-conquest of Crete as the liberation of an Orthodox population from their non-Orthodox rulers.¹²² If the author of the continuation was taking inspiration from Prokopios specifically for this reason, it would support the argument of those who have argued that the Romans maintained an ethnic affinity with some of the inhabitants of Crete.

Although the continuation undoubtedly uses Prokopios' account of the re-conquest of North Africa as a model, it is not certain that this is because the author conceived of the Cretan expedition as a liberation. The narrative diverges from Prokopios' in several significant ways and omits nearly all of the language of liberation. For example, Prokopios includes many examples of oppression against the Libyans on the part of the Vandals. He mentions that the Vandal king Geiseric seized the property of the Libyans, thereby driving them into poverty.¹²³ Later, king Huneric forced the Orthodox Christians to convert to Arianism and "those who he saw were not yielding to him willingly he burned or destroyed by other forms of execution."¹²⁴ Some of these individuals made their way to Constantinople and were seen with their tongues missing. Another king, Gunthamund, "subjected the Christians to still greater suffering."¹²⁵ Prokopios includes these

¹²¹ Justinian in one of his *Novels* writes that the expedition was "on behalf of Orthodoxy and the liberation of our subjects." For this reference, and the other motivation contemporary authors apply see Kaldellis, *The Wars of Justinian* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 168 fn. 3.

¹²² Kaldellis, "The Byzantine Conquest of Crete (961 AD), Prokopios' Vandal War, and the Continuator of the Chronicle of Symeon," 304. Other possibilities motivations for using Prokopios' account as a model are mentioned, such as the loss of a southern province to a non-Orthodox people, the raids suffered from that province, and the many failed attempts at re-conquest. See also J. Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 196-197.

¹²³ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.6.12-15.

¹²⁴ Prokopios, *Wars* 3.8.3-4.

¹²⁵ Prokopios, *Wars* 3.8.7.

examples to invoke pity for the Libyans, justifying the expedition and Justinian's "undertaking the task of protecting the Christians in Libya from tyrants."¹²⁶ The continuation of the *Chronicle* of Symeon included in Theophanes Continuatus makes no such mentions of the oppression of Cretan Romans, nor does it allude to this population again after the deliberation scene.

In Prokopios' account, the Roman general Belisarios punishes his soldiers for plundering the land of the Libyans, "who have always been Romans."¹²⁷ Later, he praises his soldiers for ceasing to take from the Libyans and reminds them that "all the Libyans had been Romans in earlier times and had come under the Vandals by no will of their own and had suffered many outrages at the hands of these barbarians."¹²⁸ According to Prokopios, Belisarios considers the Libyans to be fellow Romans, or at least the descendants of Romans, and provides this shared identity as a reason that the soldiers should not do them harm. The continuation shows no such deference to a supposed Cretan Roman population. For example, while Prokopios says that Belisarios was able to journey through Libya "as if in his own land (καθάπερ ἐν χώρᾳ οἰκείᾳ)" because of his good treatment of the Libyan people, the Roman soldiers on Crete only considered themselves "as though they were on their own land (ὥς ἐν οἰκείῳ χώρῳ)" after enclosing the "Cretans" within Chandax and chasing after any who remained outside the city.¹²⁹ The author then describes how Nikephoros sent the Roman army out into the countryside, overrunning "the place where their [the enemy's] herd and animals and property were hidden and they themselves were camped, the plundered all and returned with joy and victory."¹³⁰ The soldiers placed their tents among the fruit trees and ate from them, apparently until there was nothing left, since they had

¹²⁶ Prokopios, *Wars* 3.10.19.

¹²⁷ Prokopios, *Wars* 3.16.3.

¹²⁸ Prokopios, *Wars* 3.21.19.

¹²⁹ Prokopios, *Wars* 3.17.6; Theophanes Continuatus 476.

¹³⁰ Theophanes Continuatus 476.

otherwise expended all the “food and resources of the Cretans.”¹³¹ The author of the continuation does not include the expressions of shared Romanness present in Prokopios’ account nor the same awareness of the burdens on the local inhabitants caused by the Roman army.

Lastly, Prokopios provides a few examples of the Libyans supporting the Romans in their conflict with the Vandals and, if this same theme were to appear in the version of the continuation of Symeon’s *Chronicle*, it would support the argument that some Cretans viewed Nikephoros’ expedition as a liberation from their Muslim rulers. A certain Pudentius, “one of the natives of Tripolis in Libya,” caused his town to revolt against the Vandals and, generally, the Libyans supported the Romans by selling them provisions.¹³² Prokopios could at least suggest that some viewed the expedition in the manner of a liberation. The continuation, however, records no such assistance from the oppressed inhabitants of Crete. The only potential references to the local inhabitants joining with the Roman army are two mentions of “deserters (αὐτόμολοι).”¹³³ The author of this version does not attach any ethnonym to these deserters, but he does not indicate that he viewed them as fellow Romans. Another version of the continuation interprets these deserters as “Hagarenes.”¹³⁴ Perhaps this is all simply another remnant of Prokopios, who also mentions unspecified deserters flocking to the Roman camp.¹³⁵ In either case, the continuation does not claim that a portion of the Cretans viewed the Roman army as their liberators and came to support them.

In short, the continuation of the *Chronicle* of Symeon in Theophanes Continuatus uses the narrative of the Vandal War as written by Prokopios, which, at times, justifies the expedition by

¹³¹ The mention of fruit trees is also taken from Prokopios, *Wars* 3.17.10; Theophanes Continuatus 478 and 480.

¹³² Prokopios, *Wars* 3.10.22-24 for Pudentius; 3.17.6 for the furnishing of a market.

¹³³ Theophanes Continuatus 476 and 480.

¹³⁴ *The Revised Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete* 99.

¹³⁵ Prokopios, *Wars* 4.1.7.

framing it as a liberation. This continuation, with the exception of one brief reference in the deliberation scene, omits the language of liberation and, in some instances, contradicts it. Another version of the text excludes the deliberation scene entirely.¹³⁶ Instead, imagery and language of a foreign conquest dominates the rest of the narrative. The first motivation the author offers for the Cretan expedition was that “the Cretan were perpetuating many terrible and evil acts against the land of the Romans.”¹³⁷ This idea of vengeance is repeated in the deliberation scene and again in a speech of Nikephoros Phokas.¹³⁸ The author did not distinguish between Roman and Muslim Cretans, but refers to the Cretans as a whole and with religiously charged language. He calls them variously “deniers of Christ,” braggarts against Christ,” and the “impiously armed enemy.”¹³⁹ Although the author recognizes that Crete used to be a Roman island, he has the Roman general remind his soldiers that it is now a “Syrian island (ἀναλογισώμεθα ὅτι ἔνδον ἐσμέν τῆς Συριακῆς νήσου).”¹⁴⁰ The version in Theophanes Continuatus breaks off while the Romans were still besieging Chandax, but the other two variations add that Nikephoros received a triumph for his victory on Crete. The Romans paraded the Cretan emir ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (whom they called Kouroupas) and his family through the city, all of whom were dressed in white.¹⁴¹ The continuator does not develop the idea liberation throughout his account and instead predominately frames his narration as the conquest of a foreign enemy. It seems rather that the deliberation scene is a literary remnant of a classicizing account, not intended to present the expedition as a liberation.

¹³⁶ See the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon* in Theophanes Continuatus 759

¹³⁷ Theophanes Continuatus 473-474. An Arabic account of the conquest and its justification is quite similar to the Roman sources. See Ibn al-Dāyā’s account in Christides, “The Cycle of the Arab-Byzantine Struggle in Crete (CA 824/6-961 AD) in the Illuminates Manuscript of Skylitzes (Codex Matritensis Graecus VITR. 26-2),” *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011): 35-36.

¹³⁸ Theophanes Continuatus 478.

¹³⁹ This kind of language is present throughout. Theophanes Continuatus 478.

¹⁴⁰ Theophanes Continuatus 478.

¹⁴¹ The leader of the Vandals was stripped of purple clothing in Prokopios, *Wars* 4.9.10-12.

Some scholars have also found evidence to support the notion of liberation in another contemporary narrative, the *History* of Leon the Deacon. This historian refers to “native-born men” (ἰθαγενεῖς ἄνδρας) who served as guides and assisted the Roman army in travelling throughout the Cretan countryside.¹⁴² Some have claimed that these natives, or *ithageneis*, were the descendants of Cretans who had maintained their ethnic identity (understood to be Greek) and who joined with the Roman army on account of a sense of ethnic affinity.¹⁴³ According to this view, the native Cretans supported the army of Nikephoros Phokas as they had long awaited the return of Roman rule and desired to acquire their freedom from the Muslim emirate. Thus, scholars have not necessarily argued that Leon viewed the Roman army as the liberator of the Cretans, but rather that a component of the local population viewed the soldiers in this way.

The interpretation of *ithageneis* as non-Muslim Cretans is immediately problematic, for elsewhere in the text, Leon mentions the defeat of “native-born barbarians” (ἰθαγενῶν βαρβάρων) outside of the city of Chandax. A recent translation of the text has noted the difficulty of interpreting this second mention of *ithageneis*. The translators suggested that the first instance denotes “Christian descendants of Greek natives of Crete” and the second refers to “Cretan Muslim Arabs.” The distinction appears to have been made on the basis that the first group assisted the Roman army, while the second group contended against it. However, it is difficult to accept that Leon distinguished between different groups based solely on collaboration with the Romans. As discussed above, Photios and other so-called renegades fought against the Romans and the revision

¹⁴² Leon the Deacon, *History* 1.7.

¹⁴³ This is implied translation of the *History* in A.M. Talbot and D. Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005) 70 n. 2; Christides, *The Conquest of Crete*, 163. See also, N. Panagiotakis, *Θεοδόσιος ὁ Διάκονος καὶ τὸ ποίημα αὐτοῦ “Ἀλώσις τῆς Κρήτης,”* (Iraklio, 1960), 63. A reference in Kaminiates, *On the Capture of Thessaloniki* 74.2. refers to the autochthonous of Crete and this has been interpreted likewise to refer to the Greek-speaking Christian population of the island. See Christides, “A Supplementary Investigation Tracing the Christians under the Shadow of Muslim Rule in the Emirate of Crete (ca 825/6-961 CE),” 4-5. But again, this does not necessarily preclude the author from viewing the Muslims of Crete to be the native inhabitants of the island, here contrasted with those arriving from the fleet of Leon of Tripoli.

of the *Chronicle* of Symeon says that “Hagarenes” deserted to the Romans. Roman sources also record that a monk, who either was originally from the island or came to it after the Arab conquest, brought the Arabs to the place where they built the city of Chandax.¹⁴⁴ There is also reference to a certain patrician Nasr the “Cretan,” or al-Aqrīṭīšī, who fought on the side of the Romans at Melitene.¹⁴⁵ One’s identity cannot be interpreted based upon an example of their support, or lack thereof, for a particular group. Rather, it is more likely that Leon interprets the same group as acting in both of these instances.

There are two possible interpretations that resolve the question of whom exactly Leon considers the *ithageneis* to be. The first is that Leon considers the Muslims to be native to Crete and refers to their place of origin without indicating any ethnic difference between natives and non-natives. Theophanes Continuatus writes similarly of the Cretans at the time of the Muslim conquest, saying that the Muslims “overran the whole island and several of those lying nearby no less, so that they settled to live on them, enslaving the inhabitants (οικήτορας) and natives (αὐτόχθονας).”¹⁴⁶ The author made a distinction between those who were native to the islands and those who had only recently come to live there, without indicating that some were Romans and some were not. Leon, elsewhere in his *History*, mentions a group of “natives” (ἰθαγενῶν) in Tarsos whom he contrasts to the “immigrants” (ἐπηλύδων), though the latter term can also be used to describe foreign *ethne* or *gene*.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Leon may have understood the Muslims as indigenous Cretans, a term which he uses interchangeably with barbarian and Hagarene throughout his narrative. Theophanes Continuatus writes similarly of the inhabitants of ninth century Spain, saying that the Muslims “over the long course of time they have received the name of

¹⁴⁴ Genesios, *On the Reigns of Emperors* 2.10.

¹⁴⁵ Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* 2.1, 47.

¹⁴⁶ Theophanes Continuatus 77.

¹⁴⁷ Leon the Deacon, *History* 4.1.

Spaniards.”¹⁴⁸ Finally, when Leon summarizes how Nikephoros Phokas “put to the sword (μαχαίρας ἀπεργασάμενος) some of the native-born barbarians” and “easily and quickly shut the remainder up in the town” he is echoing back to an earlier moment in the *History* when the Romans “put to the sword (μαχαίρας ἔργον ἐθέμεθα) large numbers of the barbarians” and “confined the survivors within the town.”¹⁴⁹ The “native-born barbarians” are then the same group that he otherwise calls barbarians and Cretans. Should this be the case, the appearance of *ithageneis* Cretans would no longer support the modern claim that a part of the Cretan population perceived the Romans as their liberators and co-ethnics.

The other possibility is that Leon, similar to those in the first two case studies, distinguishes between Cretan Muslims and the descendants of Cretan Romans by referring to the latter as natives. Some scholars have proposed this interpretation but have not treated equally both usages of *ithageneis*. If they are translated to mean the same group, then not only were “native-born men” seen guiding the Roman army through the countryside in order to find a hostile army, but “native-born barbarians” were fighting the Romans outside the walls of Chandax. This is certainly not indicative of wide-spread acknowledgment of the Roman army as liberators, nor does it demonstrate that Leon perceived the *ithageneis* to be fellow Romans. He is then referring to them as a second group of barbarians, distinct from the Muslims and from the Romans. Regardless, the reference to native Cretans does not provide solid evidence for a population desirous of liberation, but instead shows that Leon either found the Muslims to be the native occupants of Crete, or the descendants of Cretan Romans to be among the barbarians who fought against the expedition.

The *History* of Leon the Deacon, much like the continuation of the *Chronicle* of Symeon, narrates the Cretan expedition as a foreign conquest and act of revenge, not as a liberation of the

¹⁴⁸ Theophanes Continuatus 74.

¹⁴⁹ Leon the Deacon, *History* 2.1 and 1.6.

Cretan people. Leon states that Romanos sent an army against the Muslims of Crete “who were arrogant and had murderous intentions against the Romans” and who “were plundering the shores of the Roman empire on a large scale.”¹⁵⁰ He explains that Romanos wanted to “make good” on a previous defeat at the hands of the Cretans.¹⁵¹ Nikephoros Phokas, in a speech of encouragement to his soldiers, lamented “isn't it true that almost all of our coastline is uninhabited as a result of their rapine? Aren't most of the islands deserted because of their raids? Therefore Providence has by no means tolerated that these liars, these most evil beasts, these lazy gluttons feed forever off the Christian people, but, with the help of the Almighty, it has brought us here to repay them sevenfold.”¹⁵² This passage frames the conquest as retribution for the suffering of the Romans on the mainland and it includes language hostile to the Cretans, emphasizing their inferiority to the Romans. Leon adds that “acting like Romans we will demonstrate the vigorous and brave spirit of our noble people” in contrast to the “barbarous wild beasts.”¹⁵³ Leon primarily presents the Cretan expedition as an example of Roman and Christian power under the leadership of Nikephoros Phokas that defeated a barbarian enemy, without reference to a sense of obligation to the descendants of Roman Cretans.

Leon the Deacon's account of the re-conquest of Crete records one additional aspect not found in either of the other contemporary narratives and this too is revelatory of how the author comprehended the conflict. Leon writes that, after the conquest of Chandax:

“Nikephoros ordered his men to raze the circuit wall to the ground; and when it had been demolished in many places, he led his forces out again into the countryside. After he had plundered this area and taken captives, and had subdued every foe without bloodshed, he went to a lofty and steep hill, which was not very far away from the ruined town, and ordered all the soldiers to build a wall. For the place seemed safe, and good for a defensive position, since it was cut off by cliffs and steep ravines on both sides, and gave forth

¹⁵⁰ Leon the Deacon, *History* 1.2.

¹⁵¹ Leon the Deacon, *History* 1.3 This previous defeat was of the expedition sent by Konstantinos VII in 949.

¹⁵² Leon the Deacon, *History* 1.6.

¹⁵³ Leon the Deacon, *History* 1.6.

perpetual springs from the summit, and was watered with their streams. After the defense works were made very secure and strong, he settled a sufficient army there, and named the town Temenos. Then he pacified (ἐξημερώσας) the entire island, settling it with bands of Armenians, Romans, and other rabble (Ἀρμενίων τε καὶ Ῥωμαίων καὶ συγκλύδων φατρίας ἐνοικισάμενος); and he left behind fire-bearing triremes to defend the island.”¹⁵⁴

While the other contemporary narratives shift away from Crete immediately after the sack of the city, Leon explains that the Romans initiated a program of settlement transfers and large construction projects after the victory at Chandax.¹⁵⁵ The Romans enacted large-scale resettlements for a number of reasons, but Leon ties this transfer specifically to the pacification of the island. The Romans may have intended to settle a population that included or could furnish soldiers, who could facilitate the process of consolidation and reintegration of Crete into the larger imperial framework. Moreover, the fortification of Temenos was built on top of a large hill high above the plains of central Crete. This fortification and garrison were much better suited to protect the interior of the island, not to ward off the continued threat of Muslim raids or an attempt by a nearby Muslim state to re-conquer Crete. Leon notes that the placement of Roman ships was for the latter purpose. Instead, the construction of this fortification at such a central and prominent location demonstrates Roman authority in the area.¹⁵⁶ This function becomes more likely when it is considered that Nikephoros not only levelled the walls of the Muslim capital of the island, but also led his army out into the countryside where he encountered further enemies. Leon’s account may not be an entirely accurate or comprehensive representation of the re-conquest of Crete and

¹⁵⁴ Leon the Deacon, *History* 2.8. Yaqut al-Hamawi adds that the harbor was blocked from entry. See A. Tibi, “Two Sources on Arab Crete: al-Majālis wa’l-Musāyarāt and Mu’jam al-Buldān,” *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011): 121-122.

¹⁵⁵ Skylitzes also notes Nikephoros’ concern with laying the new foundations of Crete after the conquest. He writes that Nikephoros “was going to remain there for some time in order to set its affairs in order,” but was recalled from Crete while still undertaking to consolidate the conquest. Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 249-250.

¹⁵⁶ N. Gigourtakis, “Οχυρώσεις στην Κρήτη κατά τη Β’ βυζαντινή περίοδο,” in *Πεπραγμένα Ι’ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Χανιά 1-6 Οκτωβρίου 2006, τομ. Α’, Στρογγυλή Τράπεζα “Μεσοβυζαντινή Κρήτη,”* eds. E.G. Kapsomenos, M. Andreadaki-Vlaziaki, M. Andrianikis & E. Papadopoulou (Chania: Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος “Ο Χρυσόστομος,” 2011), 366-372. The process of resettlement was certainly an impressive display of imperial authority as well. Neville, *Authority in Provincial Society*, 41.

the reaction of the inhabitants to the arrival of the Romans, but he does not present this narrative as though there were Cretans who welcomed the return to Roman rule, nor does he show that the Roman army viewed themselves as liberators.

The final account discussed here, though chronologically produced first, is the epic poem titled *The Capture of Crete*, written by Theodosios the Deacon. Theodosios began writing the poem while the expedition against the island was still underway and the poem was presented to Nikephoros Phokas in 963, probably in the months between the death of emperor Romanos II and the acclamation of Nikephoros Phokas.¹⁵⁷ The poem is divided into five “recitations” or “cantos,” some of which may have been based upon military dispatches sent from Nikephoros to Romanos II, but the text is also highly panegyric and classicizing in nature. Theodosios includes some of the language of retribution discussed in the previous texts, calling Nikephoros Phokas the “avenger of Rome (Ρώμης ἐκδικητά),” for example.¹⁵⁸ This text, more than any of the others, contrasts the virtues of Romanness with the vices of the barbarians, whom it frequently calls “the Cretans.” In a speech to his soldiers Nikephoros Phokas encouraged each of his soldiers to “show himself armed like a Roman only let him not sully the power of Rome” and later to “let no one through fear fail to appear a scion (κλάδος) of Rome. Let no one be eager to show himself a bastard offspring (νόθον γέννημα) and foreign seed (σποράν ξένην) amid evils.”¹⁵⁹ Elsewhere, one of the Roman officers “showed what kind of men Rome fosters (ἔδειξεν οἷους ἄνδρας ἡ Ρώμη τρέφει).”¹⁶⁰ In contrast, the descriptions of the Cretans are filled with ethnic and religious prejudice. Theodosios calls them

¹⁵⁷ On this poem and its context, see M.D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts II* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science Press, 2019) 41-49; L. Andriollo, “Il ‘De Creta capta’ di Teodosio Diacono fra epos storico ed encomio imperiale,” *RSBN* 47 (2011): 31–56.

¹⁵⁸ See the first line of the proem of Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete*.

¹⁵⁹ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 2.158-160.

¹⁶⁰ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 4.99-101.

“camel eaters,” “evil barbarian snakes,” and “false worshippers” among other insults.¹⁶¹ He mentions the “language of the barbarians” for those who cried out “in their ancestral manner (ἡ βοή μὲν ἦν ἔθει τῷ πατρίῳ)” and he includes an attempt at a transcription of Arabic.¹⁶² He makes Crete itself appear barbaric and strange. Theodosios writes that “land of the barbarians groaned (ἡ γῆ μὲν ἐστέναζεν ἡ τῶν βαρβάρων)” at the arrival of the Romans and he laments to the emperor how the Romans struggled in a “foreign land (ἔπασχον ἐν ξένοις τόποις).”¹⁶³ Theodosios leaves little room in this poem for the existence of an oppressed population of Cretan Roman co-ethnics. For the poet, the island and its inhabitants were thoroughly barbarous and ought to be conquered, not liberated.

When the poem acknowledges that Crete used to be Roman, the attention is more on the island itself and not the inhabitants of it. Nikephoros Phokas asks his soldiers to behold “these seagirt places, behold the many lovely islands round about. They were the settlement of ancestral Rome, the land of [our] sovereigns, but sluggishness and torpor crept over us and rendered the land alien (ἔδειξε γῆν ἀλλοτρίαν).”¹⁶⁴ This merely expresses that Crete used to be Roman, but it had since ceased to be so. Towards the end of the poem, Theodosios concludes that Chandax became “as once before, again a Roman city, a desired city, an extraordinary city, a famous city, the rich city.”¹⁶⁵ Again, this indicates that the island, or in this case its largest city, was now Roman again, but mentions of a formerly Roman people are absent. Theodosios attributes the absence of

¹⁶¹ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 1.68 for “camel eaters,” 1.177 for “evil barbarian snakes,” and “false worshippers” 2.73. For a fuller discussion of the portrayal of the Cretans, see D. Sullivan, *The Rise and Fall of Nikephoros Phokas: Five Contemporary Texts in Annotated Translations* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 130; Andriollo, “Il ‘De Creta capta’ di Teodosio Diacono fra epos storico ed encomio imperiale,” 44-47.

¹⁶² Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 2.79. Theodosios says that the Cretans cried out “Σεῖπη ἔχειμὰτ ἰσχαρὸν καὶ τὴν ῥάσαν σερμητ μιδήνη καὶ χάητ ἱψησάνη.” A translation is attempted by N. Serikoff, “Seiepf Ekheimat or What Did the Arabs Cry?: Arabic Military Exclamations in the De Creta Capta by Theodosius Diaconus,” *JÖByz* 47 (1997): 81–86.

¹⁶³ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 1.47. and 2.3.

¹⁶⁴ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 1.81.

¹⁶⁵ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 5.115-118.

Romans to the “sluggishness” and “torpor” that he claimed had taken Crete from the Romans and left the island “nourishing the enemy and bereft of [our] children.”¹⁶⁶ This does not mean that the poet is correct that there were no longer Cretans who identified as Romans – nor does he explicitly say that there were not – only that, in framing this narrative and presenting it to the Roman court, he imagined that there were not.

Conclusion

It is difficult to qualify the extent to which the Cretans maintained their Roman identity throughout the period of Muslim rule. The Cretan voices are not preserved. It is possible that many Cretans, perhaps even a majority of them, continued to identify as Romans or re-fashioned what it meant to be Roman based on the changing circumstances. The extant evidence challenges the view that the cultural and religious differences between Roman and Cretan Muslims would have inhibited assimilation. The sources reveal that some of the descendants of Cretan-Romans converted to Islam, practiced some Muslim customs, and entered the military service of the emirate.¹⁶⁷ It appears that they adopted these changes willingly and were encouraged to do so by the Muslim state.

Most of the Roman writers ceased to believe that Romans inhabited Crete. Some texts, such as the *Life of Saint Nikon* and the *Life of Basileios*, distinguish between two groups of Cretans, one that was Muslim and one that was descended from Romans. They employ language of distinction such as the rejection of baptism, changes in custom, and cohabitation, all of which were used to differentiate Romans from non-Romans. Others, such as those that narrate the Cretan

¹⁶⁶ Theodosios the Deacon, *On the Capture of Crete* 1.82.

¹⁶⁷ Ibn Hawqal found Crete to be a majority Muslim space. See Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, 109. The Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz invoked the aid of “those of our grandfather’s nations” in a letter to the ruler of Egypt. Tibi, “Two Sources on Arab Crete,” 119-121.

expedition, define the island and its people predominately by their barbarian and foreign rulers. The island was a “land of barbarians” and mentions of the Cretans were accompanied by ethnic and religious slurs. With one potential exception, the contemporary narratives do not present the expedition as a liberation of an oppressed Roman population, nor do they claim that the Cretans expressed ethnic solidarity with the incoming Roman soldiers. At least from the perception of these Roman authors, it appears as though Crete and the Cretans had ceased to be Roman by the time that the Roman army returned in 961.

CHAPTER 2: Sicily

At approximately the same time as the Muslims from Spain began their conquest of Crete, the Aghlabid emirate of north Africa sent an army to the island of Sicily.¹⁶⁸ Although they may have only intended to cause trouble for the Romans by aiding a rival claimant to the imperial throne, the expedition developed into a contest for the entirety of the island. This conquest, unlike the Muslim capture of Crete, took several generations to complete.¹⁶⁹ The Aghlabid army that reached Sicily in the summer of 827 experienced many setbacks and would not entirely wrest control of the island for nearly a century. Over several generations, Muslims from the city of Palermo took control of all of the towns of Sicily, some of which were allowed to remain in a state of semi-autonomy. The Romans intermittently sent large expeditions in order to turn back the momentum of the Muslim conquest, but many of these ended in disaster and none of them was able to halt the Muslim advance through the island. The conquest of Sicily culminated in the capture of Taormina in 902 and the few remaining semi-autonomous settlements were forcibly absorbed by the end of the tenth century. The Muslims defeated one final attempt by the Romans to regain Sicily in the early eleventh century, after which the island would remain under Muslim control until the arrival of Normans from southern Italy a few decades later.

¹⁶⁸ For this narrative, see M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1854-1858); L.C. Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Malta: Midsea Books, 2011), 13-65; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 61-88, 127-137, 143-144, 187-188, 204-208, 219-222; and A. Nef and V. Prigent, "Guerroyer pour la Sicile (827-902)," in *La Sicilia del IX secolo tra Bizantini e musulmani*, ed. S. Modeo, M. Congiu, and L. Santagati (Caltanissetta: Sciascia editore, 2013): 13-40. Nef notes that "conquest" is somewhat of a misnomer, as much of the conflict was characterized by an extended state of guerrilla warfare. See A. Nef, "Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy (7th-11th Century)," in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 206.

¹⁶⁹ For parallels with Crete, see N.C. Koutrakou, "Crete and Sicily: Parallel and Diverging Perceptions of the Islands by Middle and Late Byzantine Writers (10th-15th c.)," *Graeco-Arabica* 13 (2017): 129-170.

The long duration of the Muslim conquest of Sicily and the distance of the island from the imperial center of the Roman state are circumstances that are beneficial to the study of Romanness on the periphery.¹⁷⁰ During the period before and during the conquest, it is possible to observe that the inhabitants of Sicily considered themselves to be part of a larger Roman community and to trace the views of contemporary Roman writers towards Sicily over the course of the Muslim conquest. Such an investigation helps develop an understanding of the geographic scope of Roman identity by engaging with arguments that the inhabitants of Sicily did not consider themselves to be Roman and were not accepted as Romans by others. Moreover, in the case of Sicily, it is possible to place the Greek-language sources in conversation with the many Arabic and Latin-language accounts of the island. These sources provide balance to the Roman ones, by offering historical and ethnographic descriptions of Sicily that offer an outsider's view of the relationship between the people of Sicily and the rest of Romanía. The Arabic and Latin-language sources continue to associate the Greek-speaking population of Sicily with the inhabitants of the Roman state, while contemporary Romans living beyond the island appear hesitant to include such people as part of the Roman community, despite the shared markers of language and religion.

The Romanness of Sicily

As is the case for other more peripheral parts of the Roman state, scholars have not always accepted the Romanness of the inhabitants of Sicily. Sicilian Romans have been referred

¹⁷⁰ Koutrakou discusses “Byzantine” perceptions of the people of Sicily but focuses more on the literary reception of the island itself. See Koutrakou, “The Eye of Constantinople: Continuity and Change in the 11th-12th Century Byzantine Perception of Sicily,” in *Byzantino-Sicula VI: La Sicilia e Bisanzio nei secoli XI e XII*, ed. R. Lavagnini and C. Rognoni (Palermo: Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici, 2014), 21-50.

to as Greeks, Byzantines, and Sicilians – sometimes interchangeably.¹⁷¹ Some scholars have understood the Sicilians of this period through the lens of the island’s earlier inhabitants, such as the ancient Greeks, Romans of the republican and earlier imperial period, Carthaginians, Sikels, and Sicanians.¹⁷² Others instead have focused solely on the religious identity of the Sicilians, without reference to any particular ethnonym, as this aspect of one’s identity is much easier to distinguish during the period of Muslim rule.¹⁷³ Some have noted the possible influence of the so-called “tyranny of distance” on the identity construction of the inhabitants of Sicily.¹⁷⁴ That is, they have found that Sicilians came to see their imperial officials and the court in Constantinople as increasingly foreign and no longer able to meet their responsibilities toward their subjects, leading some scholars to perceive that the island was detached from or disloyal to the rest of Romanía.¹⁷⁵ The selective focus of Constantinopolitan sources, who turn to the island most often when describing rebellions that originated there, has contributed to this sense.¹⁷⁶ These notions

¹⁷¹ Much has been written on the “Hellenization” and “Byzantinization” of the island. See L. White Jr. “The Byzantinization of Sicily,” *AHR* (1936): 1-21; Charanis, “The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlements in Greece,” *DOP* 5 (1950): 144-148; Charanis, “On the Question of the Hellenization of Sicily and Southern Italy During the Middle Ages,” *AHR* 52.1 (1946): 74-86; J. Herrin, *Margins and Metropolis: Authority across the Byzantine Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 33-57. For Greeks, Byzantines, and Sicilians, see Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 19; S.C. Davis-Secord, “Medieval Sicily and Southern Italy in Recent Historiographical Perspective,” *History Compass* 8 (2010): 61–87; Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 107; W. Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 4; A. Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic speakers and the end of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7-8.

¹⁷² Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* II, 195-196; Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 19.

¹⁷³ As is noted by Davis-Secord, *Medieval Sicily and Southern Italy in Recent Historiographical Perspective*, 67; Guillou sees the existence of Orthodox monasticism in Sicily until at least the 13th century as a feature medieval Greek civilization. See A. Guillou, “Greco d'Italie du Sud et de Sicile au Moyen Age: Les moines,” *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 75 (1963): 110.

¹⁷⁴ On this concept, and an argument against its applicability in the case of Sicily, see von Falkenhausen, “The Tyranny of Distance? Die byzantinischen Provinzen in Süditalien und Konstantinopel (7.–11. Jahrhundert),” in *Southern Italy as a Contact Area and Border Region during the Early Middle Ages*, ed. K. Wolf and K. Herbers (Cologne: Bohlau Verlag, 2018), 185-228.

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 19. For earlier examples, see A. Rambaud *L'empire grec au dixième siècle: Constantin Porphyrogénète*, (Paris: A. Franck, 1870), 449; J.B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire: from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1912), 295-296.

¹⁷⁶ See M. Nicheanian and V. Prigent, “Les stratégies de Sicile: de la naissance du thème au règne de Léon V,” *REByz* 61 (2003): 132.

of distance and imperial disinterest have heightened the sense that Roman Sicilians were somehow distinct from other Romans.

Before the arrival of the Muslims, however, Roman writers clearly identified the inhabitants of Sicily as fellow Romans and saw the island as an integral part of the Roman world. Prokopios recorded that the general Belisarios recovered “the whole of the island for the Romans” and was “loudly applauded by the army and the Sicilians” as he entered Syracuse.¹⁷⁷ Sicily received a *strategos* in the early eighth century and the names of many of its military commanders are recorded, indicating the importance of the island for the court in Constantinople.¹⁷⁸ Many studies have demonstrated the strong cultural and economic relationships between Sicily and Constantinople.¹⁷⁹ These connections included the movements of Romans (such as the ninth century patriarch Methodios) to and from the island, common political institutions, and the circulation of imperial imagery – especially through the mint in Syracuse, all of which served to reinforce the sense of belonging to a larger Roman community.¹⁸⁰ There is little reason to suggest that the collective identity of the Sicilians on the eve of the Muslim conquest was something other than Roman.

Non-Roman sources also clearly represent the inhabitants of Sicily as Romans. Arabic accounts consistently and unproblematically identify a Roman population of Sicily, which they

¹⁷⁷ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.6.18-19.

¹⁷⁸ Nichanian and Prigent, *Les stratèges de Sicile*, 97-141. See also, L. Brubaker and J.F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 492-493; Prigent, “Byzantine Administration and the Army,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 140-168; E. Ragia, “The Geography of the Provincial Administration of the Byzantine Empire (ca. 600-1200): 1.3. Apothekai of Africa and Sicily, Final Notes and Conclusions,” *Eoa kai Esperia* 8 (2012): 113-144.

¹⁷⁹ Many of these connections are identified by Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 29-71. See also T.S. Brown, “Byzantine Italy, c. 680-c. 876,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c. 700-c. 900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 345-346; S. Cosentino and E. Zannini, “Mapping the Memory of Byzantine Italy,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 3-5; E. Morini, “Monastic Life and its Institutions,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 116.

¹⁸⁰ Karlin-Hayter, “Appartenir à l'Empire,” 117-130. For the history of the Syracusan mint, see V. Prigent, “Mints, Coin Production and Circulation,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 328-359.

call the “Rum.” For example, Yaqut al-Hamawi, also called al-Rumi (the Roman), mentions the language of the Rum in explaining the etymology of the important towns of Palermo and Castrogiovanni (modern-day Enna).¹⁸¹ Arabic writers refer to the island as a Roman country with Roman inhabitants and Roman officials.¹⁸² These sources give the epithet “al-Rumi,” or “the Roman,” to individual Sicilians such as the ninth century rebel Euphemios and the tenth century Fatimid general Jawhar al-Siqilli (the Sicilian).¹⁸³ Some Arabic sources even recognize the city of Syracuse as the only other city beside Rome and Constantinople from which the “king of the Rum” ruled – perhaps a reference to Konstans II’s time there in the seventh century.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, it is clear that Arabic authors did not simply use Rum as a synonym for Christian.¹⁸⁵ Rather, they could differentiate between the religious and ethnic aspects of Romanness. Ibn Khaldun, for example, distinguishes between the territories held by various Christian groups, whom he names as Rum, Franks, and Slavs.¹⁸⁶ After the conquest of the island by the Normans of southern Italy in the late eleventh century, Al-Nuwayri records that the Frankish and Rum inhabitants of Sicily settled among the Muslim inhabitants.¹⁸⁷ Arabic authors even distinguish contemporary Romans from the ancient Greeks, demonstrating their recognition of the Romanness of the Sicilian people

¹⁸¹ Yaqut al-Hamawi in M. Amari, *BAS I* (Torino: Ermanno Loescher, 1880), 182 and 211.

¹⁸² For Roman country, including Romania, see Ibn Idhari in M. Amari, *BAS II* (Torino: Ermanno Loescher, 1881), 6-10 and Ibn Khaldun in *BAS II*, 164-165. For Roman inhabitants, Ibn Hawqal in *BAS I*, 25-26; and the text falsely attributed to Al-Waqidi in *BAS I*, 334-335. For Roman officials, Al-Nuwayri in *BAS II*, 113-114; and Ibn al-Athir in *BAS I*, 370.

¹⁸³ Euphemios called “the Roman” by Ibn al-Athir in *BAS I*, 364-365; and by Al-Nuwayri in *BAS II*, 113-114. See entry for “Dhawhar al-Sikilli” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Brill: online reference work).

¹⁸⁴ Yaqut al-Hamawi in *BAS I*, 194; and the text falsely attributed to al-Waqidi in *BAS I*, 331.

¹⁸⁵ Metcalfe rightly points out the lack of consistency in the ways in which Greek, Latin, and Arabic language sources identify the various ethnic groups inhabiting Sicily at any time and cautions against too readily accepting these ethnic designations. However, for the most part, the Arabic historians clearly distinguish the Rum from other groups of Christians and other ethnic groups, and they connect them to the Rum of Constantinople. Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 55-59 and 67. See also, K. Durak, “Who are the Romans? The Definition of the Bilād al-Rūm (Land of the Romans) in Medieval Islamic Geographies,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 31.3. (2010): 285-298.

¹⁸⁶ See again Ibn Khaldun in *BAS II*, 164-165. See also the text falsely attributed to al-Waqidi in *BAS I*, 343.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Nuwayri in *BAS II*, 145-146.

despite their use of the Greek language. Ibn Hawqal notes that the Christian Romans of Palermo honored the tomb of a philosopher of the ancient Greeks, Aristotle, and besought his aid in times of need.¹⁸⁸ These writers leave an impression of Sicily and its non-Muslim inhabitants that is predominately Roman.

Perhaps the clearest evidence that the inhabitants of Sicily were understood to be part of a larger Roman community and that their island was an integral part of the Roman state comes from the prolonged stay of Konstans II there in the mid-seventh century.¹⁸⁹ In 663, this emperor undertook a brief campaign in southern Italy in order to reinforce Roman authority in the region and to deter the Lombards from making further incursions.¹⁹⁰ After a few months in Italy, including a short stay in Rome, the emperor sailed to Syracuse and remained there until his assassination in 668. For the most part, the Roman sources have little to say about Konstans' time in Sicily, other than mentioning that he remained there out of his fear of the Constantinopolitan populace.¹⁹¹ However, Theophanes provides some additional insight as to what Konstans may have intended to accomplish during his time away from Constantinople. He twice states that Konstans planned to transfer the seat of the empire to the city of Rome (βουλθεῖς ἐν Ρώμῃ τὴν βασιλείαν μεταστήσαι and ἡβουλήθη μετενέγκαι τὸ βασίλειον εἰς Ῥώμην).¹⁹² While Konstans was never able to achieve this supposed objective, it is noteworthy that he was apparently searching to move the seat of Roman authority to Italy and that he settled in Syracuse, when this plan failed. Although

¹⁸⁸ Ibn Hawqal in *BAS* I, 11. Perhaps this is a reference to the tomb of Aristotle of Sicily, not the more famous Aristotle of Stagira, but the author does not specify.

¹⁸⁹ J.F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of an Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 59-60. Others likewise see this moment as indicative of a shared collective identity between Sicily and Constantinople, though they frame this in terms of Greeks and Byzantines. See Herrin, *Margins and Metropolis*, 40; Guillou, *Greco d'Italie du Sud et de Sicile au Moyen Age*, 82.

¹⁹⁰ Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 318-319.

¹⁹¹ Theophanes notes Konstans II had become hated for his harsh treatment of Pope Martin, Maximos the Confessor, and some of their followers. Theophanes, *Chronographia* 351-352.

¹⁹² Theophanes, *Chronographia* 348 and 351.

Theophanes does not indicate that Syracuse was intended to be the new home of imperial authority, in effect it became the de facto capital of the Roman state. Konstans managed the empire for six years from Syracuse, collecting tax revenue, housing the imperial army, and reorganizing the empire's defenses. He even attempted to bring his family to Syracuse, suggesting that having failed to establish himself in Rome, he expected Syracuse to serve as the long-term center of the Roman world.¹⁹³ Syracuse was briefly considered by the Roman emperor to be a suitable alternative to Constantinople and Rome, a fact seemingly understood by some Arabic writers that it was one of only three cities from which Romanía was ever governed.

While modern scholars traditionally have ascribed an identity other than Roman to the inhabitants of the Roman state, there is an additional reason for this denial that is specific to the history of Sicily. Scholars have noted a number of rebellions (that of Sergios in 717, Elpidios in 781, and Euphemios in 826) that had their start on the island in the eighth and ninth centuries and have posited that these rebellions indicate a desire for Sicilian self-rule and separation from the Roman state.¹⁹⁴ Some earlier historians have even seen in these revolts the beginnings of a Sicilian nationalist movement and the formation of a Sicilian people.¹⁹⁵ The depiction of these events can become particularly romanticized in order to stress the supposed nationalistic inspiration for these various rebellions. While scholars have more recently rejected this nationalistic interpretation of events, it is still suggested that the people of Sicily maintained a desire to separate from the Roman state, founded upon a growing sense of regionalism and

¹⁹³ Theophanes, *Chronicle* 348 and 351-352

¹⁹⁴ Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 20-22; Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 34 and 39-40; Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 295-296; Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*, 37; Vasiliev refutes the nationalistic interpretations, but sees in this grouping a tendency to throw off the "Byzantine yoke" in *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 66.

¹⁹⁵ Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* II, 217-218. These earlier narratives, including Ferdinand Gabotto's 19th century *Eufemio e il movimento separatist nell'Italia Bizantina*, *La Letteratura*, are discussed by Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*, 39-41; see also Vasiliev in *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 88.

distinction.¹⁹⁶ The conclusion of these arguments is that the rebellions of the eighth and ninth centuries were an expression of difference from the Roman state and a desire for self-rule.

A survey of these rebellions, and the individuals who led them, demonstrates that they were not formed out of a desire for autonomy, but rather were actions within the normal political confines of the Roman state. Each of these three Sicilian rebellions had the acclamation of a new Roman emperor, who would presumably be recognized in Constantinople, as its stated goal. Contemporary narrators frame the conflicts more like a civil war taking place within one Roman ethnic community rather than as acts of secession.¹⁹⁷ Thus, these rebellions can be viewed as a form of election – the choice of a Roman population to propose their own candidate for emperor of the Romans.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, given the evidence that the soldiers and commanders of Roman armies during this period identified closely with the concerns of their local themes, it is likely that these actions were also understood in this way by part of the Sicilian populace.¹⁹⁹ These rebellions, at least partially, represented how the people of Sicily understood their relationship with the Roman state. A close examination of these three rebellions confirms that the inhabitants of Sicily viewed themselves as members of a larger community of Romans and that they were perceived as such by other Romans.

¹⁹⁶ Apart from Brown, who does not see in this grouping of rebellions evidence of Sicilian separatism. See Brown, *Byzantine Italy*, 345-346; The works of Nachanian and Prigent have also been important in this regard. Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l'empire byzantin au VIIe siècle. L'exemple de l'Exarchat et de la Pentapole d'Italie* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1969); Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily*, 20-22.

¹⁹⁷ On Roman notions of civil war, see Stouraitis, "Byzantine War Against Christians - an 'Emphylios Polemos'?" *Byzantine Symmeikta* 20 (2010): 85-110; "Bürgerkrieg in ideologischer Wahrnehmung durch die Byzantiner (7.-12. Jahrhundert). Die Frage der Legitimierung und Rechtfertigung," *JÖByz* 60 (2010): 149-172; Treadgold, "Byzantium, the Reluctant Warrior," in *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities: Warfare in the Middle Ages*, eds. M. Yazigi and N. Christie (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 223-228.

¹⁹⁸ Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 138.

¹⁹⁹ Haldon, "Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations," *DOP* 47 (1993): 1-67. See also W. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest 471-843: an Interpretation* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1981), 233-234 and 293.

The first of these rebellions, the brief revolt of Sergios in 717, provides a clear example of how the sources depict these conflicts as expressions of Romanness on the part of the Sicilians. Theophanes the Confessor and the patriarch Nikephoros record that when a Muslim army was besieging the city of Constantinople, Sergios, the *strategos* of Sicily, crowned a certain Basileios Onomagoulos as emperor and renamed him Tiberios.²⁰⁰ Theophanes simply notes that Sergios took these actions after learning the city had come under siege and does not attempt to interpret the motivations behind the decision to crown an emperor. Nikephoros, however, provides some explanation for Sergios' actions. He writes that, "Sergios, who was the *strategos* of Sicily, along with the inhabitants of the west, gave up hope for Byzantium [Constantinople] and the emperor himself on account of the enemy attack against them, and crowned their own emperor (ἴδιον στέφουσι βασιλέα)."²⁰¹ According to Nikephoros, the proclamation of Basileios was not a result of Sergios' personal ambition, but instead was tied directly to the circumstances of Constantinople and the emperor, Leon III. Sergios anticipated (wrongly) that the Romans were soon to be without an emperor and without a seat for their empire, and therefore deemed it necessary or appropriate to crown a new one.

It is also important to recognize the role that Nikephoros and Theophanes ascribed to the people of Sicily during this sequence of events. Nikephoros claimed that it was not Sergios alone who crowned Basileios, but rather "those inhabiting the west (οἱ τὰ ἐσπέρια οἰκοῦντες)" had also given up hope of Constantinople and crowned the new emperor.²⁰² Although the account is brief, it seems that Nikephoros described a ceremony of acclamation, wherein the people gave their affirmation to the election of a new Roman emperor.²⁰³ Moreover, when the emperor Leon III

²⁰⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 398-399; Nikephoros, *Short History* 55.

²⁰¹ Nikephoros, *Short History* 55.

²⁰² Nikephoros, *Short History* 55.

²⁰³ Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, especially 103-117 and 138.

became aware of this rebellion, he sent the *patrician* Paulos to Sicily to replace Sergios as *strategos*. Both historians record that when Paulos arrived in Sicily, he gathered together the inhabitants of the island (ἐν τῇ νήσῳ λαὸν περιαθροίσας) and read an imperial decree directly to the people.²⁰⁴ Upon receiving these letters and being reassured by them, the Sicilians “immediately acclaimed (εὐφήμεσαν) Leon as emperor,” thereby reestablishing their relationship as subjects and indicating their approval of him as emperor.²⁰⁵ The inhabitants of Sicily, similar to Sergios, approved the coronation of Basileios only while they despaired the fate of the their capital and emperor. When they realized that this was in fact not the case, they reaffirmed Leon as their choice for emperor of the Romans.

The remainder of Nikephoros’ and Theophanes’ narrative also shows that Sergios and the Sicilians were not attempting to make the island independent from the rest of Romanía.²⁰⁶ Theophanes writes that Sergios was amazed to hear of the arrival of Paulos on Sicily and that he then fled to the Lombards after “recognizing his own guilt.”²⁰⁷ Theophanes does not mean that suddenly Sergios second-guessed his decision to make Basileios emperor, instead he is suggesting that Sergios was surprised that anyone could come to him from Constantinople because he believed that it had been, or was about to be, lost. He then fled to the Lombards in Italy because he realized that he had unintentionally declared himself a rival to Leon.

The inhabitants of Sicily also appear to have realized their mistake and quickly turned over Basileios and his officials to Paulos. The historians attributed this response to the reading of the *sacra* before the populace and not to a demonstration of force. Paulos arrived on the island

²⁰⁴ Nikephoros, *Short History* 55. Theophanes writes “του δε λαού αθροισθέντος.” Theophanes, *Chronographia* 398.

²⁰⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 398; Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*, 93.

²⁰⁶ Níchanian and Prigent note that Basileios, with his ties to Constantinople, would be a strange choice for a secessionist leader and they do not imagine this rebellion as one of secession. See *Les stratèges de Sicile*, 103-105.

²⁰⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 398.

with only a few other individuals and at a time when the capital was still under threat. The quick reception of this imperial envoy suggests that separatism was not a motivation for the actions of the Sicilians. The new *strategos* Paulos may have grasped that there was a misunderstanding on the part of Sergios and the others, and that this was not an attempt to proclaim a rival emperor or separate from Constantinople.²⁰⁸ Although Paulos had Basileios executed, presumably because he had been crowned a rival emperor, along with one of his commanders, the remainder were exiled or mutilated. Sergios was even granted amnesty and allowed to return to Sicily. The ease with which this rebellion was put to an end demonstrates that the revolt was not about regional independence. Instead, it shows that those involved in crowning Basileios expected that the Roman state would continue to exist, even with the loss of their capital city, and that it could do so centered on Sicily.

The revolt of Elpidios, much like the rebellion of Sergios, indicates that the people of Sicily saw themselves as part of a larger community of Romans and that this association was acknowledged by Roman authors.²⁰⁹ In this instance, however, Elpidios and the Sicilians did intend to proclaim a rival emperor and they did not end their rebellion after making contact with imperial officials. According to Theophanes, the empress Eirene, soon after becoming regent for her young son Konstantinos VI, sent a patrician named Elpidios to serve as the *strategos* of Sicily in 780.²¹⁰ Elpidios had already governed Sicily previously, so it is likely that he was well-known and connected in the region. Soon after he arrived on the island, Elpidios was accused of

²⁰⁸ P. Speck, *Kaiser Leon III., die Geschichtswerke des Nikephoros und des Theophanes und der Liber Pontificalis: eine quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Bonn: Habelt, 2002-2003), 377-401.

²⁰⁹ For this revolt, see Kislinger, who ties this rebellion to courtly intrigue, rather than an attempt to form an independent Sicily. E. Kislinger, "Elpidios (781/782) – ein Usurpator zur Unzeit," *Byzantino-Sicula III: Miscellanea di scritti in memoria di Bruno Lavagnini* (Palermo, Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici, 2000), 193-202. Again, Níchanian and Prigent bring attention to the likely Constantinopolitan connection of Elpidios and find his rebellion to be a response to unsuccessful imperial intrigue. *Les stratèges de Sicile*, 114.

²¹⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 454-456.

being involved in a plot against the empress and was recalled to Constantinople. When the *spatharios* Theophilos arrived in Sicily to arrest Elpidios, the Sicilians refused to hand him over (οὐχ ἀπέδωκαν αὐτὸν οἱ Σικελοί), forcing Eirene to send another force to the island to bring him back.²¹¹ This time she sent a larger army of thematic soldiers led by a patrician named Theodoros, who finally defeated Elpidios after several battles. Theophanes' mention that the inhabitants of Sicily were involved in keeping Elpidios in Sicily, as well as the rather strong resistance put up against the imperial army, suggests that their interests were aligned with those of Elpidios.

Theophanes does not give any indication as to how many Sicilians supported Elpidios nor does he explain why they did so, but separatism does not appear to be among the motivations. Much of Theophanes' account revolves around imperial intrigue. The rebellion broke out only after Elpidios was accused of plotting to help make the *caesar* Nikephoros emperor of the Romans, replacing Konstantinos VI and the regency of Eirene. Perhaps some of the Sicilian Romans agreed with this decision or they believed that defending Elpidios was in their own best interest for reasons that are not supplied by the sources. After his final defeat at the hands of Theodoros, Elpidios and his remaining followers were driven out of Sicily and fled to north Africa.²¹² They sought refuge from the Muslims there, who in turn "received him and kept him as if he were emperor of the Romans (ξάμενοι ὡς βασιλέα Ρωμαίων κατείχον)." Theophanes records that they then "conferred an empty coronation on him and invested him with red buskins and a crown (στέψαντες αὐτόν εἰς μάτην, καὶ περιθέντες τζαγγίων καὶ στέφανον)." The sequence of events is left somewhat ambiguous. Elpidios may have proclaimed himself emperor while still in Sicily and dressed himself in imperial regalia only upon reaching north Africa, or perhaps the entirety of these events

²¹¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 454-455.

²¹² Only a certain *doux*, Nikephoros, is mentioned by name among those who accompanied Elpidios.

did not occur until after he left Sicily. Either way, it appears that the Muslims did not really intend to act on his behalf and that the Romans in Sicily and elsewhere did not pay attention to his claim. The Roman sources lose track of Elpidios after telling the story of his rebellion. However, the historian Ibn al-Athir reports that Elpidios accompanied the Muslims during a winter raid in Syria approximately a decade later.²¹³ Ibn al-Athir does not attempt to explain Elpidios' presence, though his participation in the campaign may suggest that the Muslims wished to make use of Elpidios' imperial claim to attract other Romans in the region to his cause.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, Elpidios' aspirations were not confined to Sicily, and Theophanes recognized his various contestations for power, which received some measure of backing from the inhabitants of the island, as an attempt to become emperor of the Romans.

The rebellion of Euphemios in 826, the last recorded instance of a rival emperor of the Romans being proclaimed on Sicily, has also been the most often cited and romanticized example of the purported Sicilian separatism, because it also marks the beginning of the Muslim conquest of Sicily.²¹⁵ Theophanes Continuatus writes that Euphemios, a *tourmarch* stationed in Sicily, fell in love with a local nun and took her away from her monastery by force.²¹⁶ The woman's brothers were outraged by the crime and petitioned the emperor Michael II. Michael then ordered the *strategos* of Sicily, Konstantinos, to arrest and punish Euphemios.²¹⁷ However,

²¹³ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 363-364. See also, Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari* 30, 151.

²¹⁴ Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, 102-103.

²¹⁵ Prigent is a very notable exception to this, as this scholar has argued that the revolt of Euphemios should not be ascribed to a sense of separatism and instead finds his acclamation as Roman emperor demonstrative of the connections between Constantinople and the island of Sicily. V. Prigent, "La carrière du tourmarque Euphemios, basileus des Romains," in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine: Acquis et Nouvelles recherches*, ed. A. Jacob, J.M. Martin, and G. Noyé (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2006), 279-317.

²¹⁶ Theophanes Continuatus 82. The *Chronicon Salernitanum* also places the rebellion as developing out of a conflict between Euphemios and the island's governor over Euphemios' own wife. *Chronicon Salernitanum* 60. Arabic sources understand the cause differently, omitting this marital aspect from their narratives. See Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 364-365; Yaqt al-Hamawi in *BAS* I, 202-203; and Abu Shama in *BAS* I, 304.

²¹⁷ Theophanes Continuatus 83.

Euphemios, much like in the example of Elpidios, had supporters who refused to hand him over to imperial officials and drove away those coming to arrest him. Theophanes Continuatus claims that these supporters were some of Euphemios' own soldiers and fellow tourmarchs (τοὺς ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτοῦ χεῖρα καὶ τῶν συντουρμαρχῶν).²¹⁸ Again, it is likely that many of these soldiers and some of the officers would have been recruited locally and so the revolt may have reflected some of the concerns of the local population.

Although the sources present this dispute as the result of Euphemios' own personal crimes, they clearly identify the rebellion as quickly developing into a struggle for control of the Roman state.²¹⁹ Theophanes Continuatus writes that after Euphemios and his companions defeated the island's *strategos*, they sought the Aghlabid emir Ziyadat-Allah, "promising him to place all of Sicily under his rule and to pay many taxes, if only he would proclaim him emperor and provide certain aid."²²⁰ The emir accepted this offer and crowned Euphemios as emperor of the Romans (βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων). The continuator understood that Euphemios did not wish to be made emperor of an independent Sicily, which he in some manner offered to the emir, but rather that they were engaged in the early stages of a war for the entirety of Romanía. A seal depicting Euphemios as Roman emperor confirms this notion.²²¹ Theophanes Continuatus then explains that when Euphemios marched on Syracuse he was dressed in imperial regalia and approached the city as both emperor (βασιλικῶς) and tyrant (τυραννικῶς) – one who is illegally claiming the

²¹⁸ Ibn al-Athir records this similarly in *BAS* I, 364-365.

²¹⁹ Theophanes Continuatus likely makes use of the lost work of Theognostos "the Grammarian," who appears to have written a fuller treatment of the conflict and may himself have been a native of Sicily. See Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historian*, 79-90.

²²⁰ Theophanes Continuatus 83. It is sometimes suggested that Euphemios was to be made emperor only of Sicily. Ibn al-Athir wrote similarly that Euphemios was to hand over governance of the island in return for the emir's assistance in the conflict. Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I 364-365.

²²¹ V. Prigent, *Pour en finir avec Euphèmios, basileus des Romains*, *MEFRM* 118.2 (2006): 375–380.

position of emperor of the Romans.²²² Euphemios, while attempting to win over the Syracusans to his side, was killed by those Sicilians who were feigning to render him the “honour as befitted an emperor (τὴν προσηκούσαν βασιλεῖ τιμὴν)” and whose acclamation (ἀναγόρευσιν) “he had gladly accepted.”²²³ Theophanes Continuatus presents that Euphemios had the ambition of becoming emperor of the Romans and that the Romans of Syracuse interpreted this event in the same manner. He frames this conflict not as an act of separation, but as a contest for the emperorship of Romanía.

Arabic sources similarly interpret the rebellion of Euphemios as aimed at imperial power. These writers record that Euphemios first engaged in a series of conflicts with the local forces of Sicily and captured the city of Syracuse, where he proclaimed himself as ruler. Again, both the seals of Euphemios and the Roman literary sources make clear that he did not name himself ruler of the island of Sicily, but of the entirety of Romanía. It should not then be assumed that the Muslims misinterpreted Euphemios’ ambition as a desire to be king of Sicily alone. The sources record that Euphemios’ involvement in the rebellion diminished soon after he returned to Sicily with his Aghlabid allies.²²⁴ Al-Nuwayri writes, however, that the citizens of Castrogiovanni greeted Euphemios as he approached, promising to submit themselves to him as their new emperor.²²⁵ The people of Castrogiovanni even bowed down before him and kissed the earth. This

²²² J.F. Haldon and N. Panou, “Tyrannos Basileus: Imperial Legitimacy and Usurpation in Early Byzantium,” In *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. N. Panou and H. Schadee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 99-118; J.C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance, 963-1210* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1990), 178-190.

²²³ Theophanes Continuatus 83. The Arabic sources also refer to a sort of acclamation received by Euphemios. See Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 364-365; ibn Khaldun in *BAS* II, 174; Al-Nuwayri places this action outside Enna in *BAS* II, 118. On attempts to gain public opinion, see Kaldellis, “How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium: The Role of Public Opinion in Sedition and Rebellion,” in *Power and Subversion in Byzantium: Papers from the Forty-third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 2010*, eds. D. Angelov and M. Saxby (New York: Routledge, 2013), 43-56.

²²⁴ Abu Shama mentioned that Euphemios and his companions were excluded from a large battle against the local Sicilian forces and were asked to wear blades of grass upon their heads to distinguish them from the other Romans. Abu Shama in *BAS* I, 308.

²²⁵ Al-Nuwayri in *BAS* II, 118.

description is strikingly similar to the account of Theophanes Continuatus and appears to mirror a ceremony of acclamation that signified acceptance of a new Roman emperor. Furthermore, Al-Nuwayri's narrative includes the same ruse. The people of Castrogiovanni used this moment as an opportunity to set a trap, with the intention to kill Euphemios. Theophanes Continuatus places these events before Syracuse rather than Castrogiovanni, but the story is basically the same. The appearance of these accounts in both the Roman and Arabic sources suggests that the Sicilians were engaged in the political dynamics of the Roman state. That is, the notion that the Sicilians regarded themselves as Romans was not simply a literary conceit of the Roman sources. Rather, the sources show that the people of Sicily were participants in a broader Roman world and that they acted in accordance with this affiliation.

None of these rebellions, with the exception of Elpidios' brief appearance in Syria, progressed beyond the island of Sicily. However, the fact that these rebellions were unsuccessful and were resolved before reaching a larger scale, should not preclude them from having more wide-ranging ambitions. In other words, it should not be assumed that the scope of these rebellions was limited to Sicily and its independence, simply because the rebels were not able to extend beyond it. Although the local politics of the island may have been a factor in the crowning of rival emperors, the inhabitants of Sicily did not seek to nominate rulers meant to govern the island of Sicily alone, but rather to govern all of Romanía. These rebellions, in conjunction with the evidence of Konstans' stay on Sicily and the many relationships maintained with Constantinople, demonstrate that in the period before the Muslim conquest of the island, Sicily was as an integral part of the Roman state. There is little evidence to suggest that the Sicilians of this period conceived of themselves as anything other than Roman or were perceived as such by others.

Sicily between Muslims and Romans (828-902)

With Euphemios' call for aid from the Muslims of north Africa, Sicily would enter a period in which the island was no longer entirely in Roman hands nor was its Greek-speaking population so unproblematically identified as Roman. In the centuries that followed, contemporary Roman writers recognize the existence of Romans on Sicily with less frequency, and it becomes more difficult to tell how the inhabitants of the island defined themselves. This is despite clear evidence that Greek-Christians continued to inhabit the island and comprised a significant portion of its population throughout the entirety of the period of Muslim rule. While the story of Greek-speaking Sicilians remains a Roman one in the non-Roman sources, contemporary Roman authors generally cease to recognize the inhabitants of Sicily as fellow Romans after they had become subject to Muslim rule. In other words, the Roman people typically extended only so far as the national borders of the Roman state and, as those borders receded, the Romanness of those who lived beyond them became more difficult to acknowledge.

Roman sources are largely silent about the events following the rebellion of Euphemios and they speak only generally about the initial stages of the Muslim conquest. They do, however, lament the situation in Sicily, specifically the loss of Syracuse, and they connect these events to both the Roman people and the state. A series of texts, which were produced as part of courtly propaganda intended to promote the emperor Basileios I and his descendants, found it necessary to contend with any criticism that might follow the losses on Sicily, demonstrating that the perception of neglect of the island's Romans was a threat to the imperial image. The *Life of Basileios* recounts many of the troubles that occurred in both the east and the west during the reign of the previous emperor, Michael III, shifting blame away from Basileios and onto his

predecessor.²²⁶ Genesios likewise describes how Michael's negligence of military affairs led to a series of misfortunes which rocked "the state (τῷ πολιτεύματι)."²²⁷ Such difficulties had the potential to sever the very "sinews of Roman rule (τὰ νεῦρα τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἀρχῆς κατακόψαντες)."²²⁸ These authors noted that these general disasters were significant for the Romans as a whole, not just confined to the individual regions in which they took place.

Both texts transition from these broader concerns to the specific situation in Sicily. Genesios explains how Michael's military negligence rendered nearly all of Sicily and the west lost.²²⁹ The *Life of Basileios* likewise states that the western parts of the state had been ignored and "thus, almost the whole of that part of Italy that had formerly belonged to our New Rome, and most of the area of Sicily, had been conquered by the neighboring Carthaginian power."²³⁰ The text considers the conquests in Sicily and Italy as a loss of territories that were integral to the Roman state and does so in the midst of a larger narrative about the many misfortunes suffered by the Romans. Skylitzes, writing in the eleventh century, appends to the troubles in Sicily that "the people there were now paying taxes to the barbarians."²³¹ This reference to barbarians evokes the language of a Roman-barbarian dichotomy, suggesting that the island's inhabitants could still have been considered Romans at that time despite being separated from Roman rule. In the accounts set in the immediate decades after the revolt of Euphemios, Sicily remained integral in Roman thinking about the success of the entirety of Romanía.

When these narratives turn to the loss of Syracuse, they include a story that preserves the reputation of the emperor Basileios and places the blame on one of his officials. Genesios' account

²²⁶ *Life of Basileios* 288.

²²⁷ Genesios, *On the Reigns of the Emperors* 4.30.

²²⁸ *Life of Basileios* 288.

²²⁹ Genesios, *On the Reigns of the Emperors* 4.32.

²³⁰ *Life of Basileios* 288-289; Theophanes Continuatus 83-84.

²³¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 145.

of the loss of Syracuse, which again is placed amidst a description about the suffering of all of Romanía, begins with a lamentation for the destruction of “what hitherto had been a splendid and famous city” that “had oftentimes overcome many armies of Hellenes and barbarians (Ἑλληνικὰς τε καὶ βαρβαρικὰς δυνάμεις).”²³² The author contrasts the “pagan” and non-Roman adversaries of Syracuse with the inhabitants within the city, whom he presumably recognized as Romans. The Roman sources then follow the capture of the city with a rather strange story of some of those who fled Syracuse at the time of its capture.²³³ They write of a group of spirits who encountered some shepherds in the Peloponnesian village of Helos.²³⁴ The shepherds, according to Genesios, approached the spirits, who informed them that they had come from Syracuse, which had just recently fallen. Genesios then reports that news of this encounter made its way to the *patrikios* Adrianos, who was on his way to relieve the city. He states that their testimony about their encounter was confirmed later when some Syracusans who escaped the siege arrived in the same area of the Peloponnese. The story focuses on the response of Adrianos, who refused to believe the spirits’ story, was blamed for his delay in rescuing the city, and was ultimately punished for his “neglect of duty.”

The *Life of Basileios* blames Adrianos even more severely than Genesios, and it describes a more dramatic response from the emperor. The text states that, upon hearing of the fall of Syracuse, Basileios was uncharacteristically sent into “an almost boundless excess of anger and despair” and that only the appeal of the patriarch Photios saved Adrianos from execution.²³⁵ The unusually extreme response of the emperor is explained by the fact that Basileios, “who in

²³² *Life of Basileios* 310.

²³³ I. Anagnostakis and A. Kaldellis, “The Textual Sources for the Peloponnese, A.D. 582–959: Their Creative Engagement with Ancient Literature,” *GRBS* 54 (2014): 123–128.

²³⁴ Genesios, *On the Reigns of the Emperors* 4.33; *Life of Basileios* 311.

²³⁵ *Life of Basileios* 312.

private matters was a man of moderation and self-control, did not moderate his anger when it came to public affairs (τοῖς κοινοῖς).”²³⁶ The text connects the failure of Adrianos to relieve Syracuse to his inability to preserve the common good of the Roman people, which was of the greatest concern to the emperor. The story makes clear that its author, and the emperor, regarded the people of Syracuse as Romans, who were the responsibility of the emperor. This account describes the city as being of paramount concern to the imperial court in Constantinople, a sign that the court regarded those people as their own and necessitating the absolution of the emperor for any potential blame.

A third narration of the siege of Syracuse, written by a monk named Theodosios, likewise connects the Romans of Sicily to the broader Roman community.²³⁷ Theodosios lived in the city at the time of the siege and spent some time as a prisoner in Palermo after he was captured by the Muslims. He appears to have written this letter while in captivity and he presents the events of the siege from the perspective of a Syracusan, writing of “that which has happened to us (περὶ τῶν συμβεβηκότων ἡμῖν).”²³⁸ Much of this account relies heavily on Christian imagery. Theodosios states, for example, that the fall of the city was due to the sins that the Syracusans had committed against God, and he finds that their circumstances are analogous to the divine punishment received by Israel. However, there is evidence to suggest that Theodosios understood this conflict not only as a contest between Muslims and Christians, but that he recognized the Christians of Syracuse as part of the community of Romans. Theodosios praises the defenders of the city, especially a

²³⁶ *Life of Basileios* 312.

²³⁷ On this text, see B. Lavagnini, “Siracusa occupata dagli Arabi e l’epistola di Teodosio Monaco,” *Byzantion* 29-30 (1959-1960): 267-279. See also V. von Falkenhausen, “La conquista di Siracusa (878) nella memoria storica di Costantinopoli,” in *Per Gabriella: Studi in Ricordo di Gabriella Braga II*, eds. M. Palma and C. Vismara (Università di Cassino, 2013), 835-848.

²³⁸ For the Greek text, see C.O. Zuretti, “Ἱταλοελληνικά. L’espugnazione di Siracusa nell’880. Testo greco della lettera del monaco Teodosio,” in *Centenario della nascita di Michele Amari: Scritti di filologia e storia araba, di geografia; storia, diritto della Sicilia medievale; studi bizantini e giudaici relativi all’Italia meridionale nel medioevo; documenti sulle relazioni fra gli stati italiani ed il Levante I* (Palermo: Stabilimento Tipografico Virzi, 1910), 165-168.

particular patrician.²³⁹ The patrician and his companions, all of whom Theodosios says are of Syracusan origin, are contrasted with the cruel “barbarians.” Moreover, Theodosios relates that a Muslim commander taunted the captured Sicilians with the claim that the Muslims would also bring Constantinople under their authority.²⁴⁰ Theodosios records that threats made against the people of Sicily could extend to the rest of Romanía.

Theodosios also addresses his imprisonment and states that he and “our Christians” were confined to the same quarters as other peoples, including Tarsians, Ethiopians, Lombards, and Jews.²⁴¹ The reference to “our own Christians” is likely a designation for specifically Roman ones. While the mention of Jewish captives is a religious distinction, the contrast between the other groups is not entirely religious in nature. The mention of Ethiopians and Tarsians can indicate distinct Christian or Muslim peoples, and the Lombards (certainly understood to be a Christian people) were separated from the other Christians, among whom was the bishop of Malta, which had only recently fallen out of Roman hands.²⁴² When Theodosios refers to the Christians of Sicily in this passage and throughout the rest of the letter, it appears that he has Roman ones in mind. This suggests that the island and its people still considered themselves as part of the broader Roman community at the time of the conquest of Syracuse in 878.

There is one further brief, but explicit reference to a Roman population on the island of Sicily from the synopsis of Skylitzes. He writes that in 902 “the Hagarene fleet succeeded in capturing Taormina and many Romans were slain (τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν στόλος τὸ ἐν Σικελίᾳ

²³⁹ The Greek text is incomplete, but a Latin version is preserved. See *the Epistola Theodosii Monachi de Excidio Syracusarum* in O. Gaetani, *Vitae Sanctorum Siculorum II* (Palermo, 1657), 272-277.

²⁴⁰ *Epistola Theodosii Monachi de Excidio Syracusarum*, 276.

²⁴¹ *Epistola Theodosii Monachi de Excidio Syracusarum*, 276.

²⁴² For Malta, see B. Bruno and N. Cutajar, “Byzantine Malta,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 522-538; T.S. Brown, “Byzantine Malta: A Discussion of the Sources,” in *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights*, ed. A.T. Luttrell (London: The British School at Rome, 1975), 71-87.

ἐξεπολιόρκησε Ταυρομένιον, καὶ πολὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐγενετο φόνος).”²⁴³ Taormina was effectively the last Roman controlled town on the island of Sicily and Skylitzes very clearly includes the population among the Romans. It is surprising that there are so few references to the people of Sicily after the revolt of Euphemios in 827, especially considering that the long and eventful struggle over the island receives so much attention from Arabic historians. Roman writers seem either uninterested or unaware of the history of Sicily, but at least in the specific instances of the fall of Syracuse in 878 and Taormina in 902, they recognized that parts of the island were still inhabited by Romans.

The Arabic sources are much fuller for this period than the Roman ones and much more explicit in connecting the Romans of Sicily to the rest of the Roman world. Some Arabic texts even offer their perspective as to how the Sicilians understood their own place within a larger Roman community. A brief anecdote, misattributed to the historian Al-Waqidi, exhibits an unnamed Sicilian ruler’s pride in his Romanness.²⁴⁴ The author describes a conversation between a Muslim envoy and the Roman governor of Sicily before a battle between the Muslims and the Romans. Among his boasts, the envoy recalled the Muslim victories over the emperor Herakleios and the conquest of Syria from the Romans. The Roman commander responded that the cities of Sicily surpassed the other Roman cities that the Muslims had conquered; he rejected the notion that the Sicilians would ever deny the religious traditions of their forefathers, and he ultimately threatened to bring this conflict all the way back to the territories of the Muslims. The commander’s threats never materialized, and the Muslims defeated the Romans soon after, but his declarations show that the Muslims interpreted their counterparts in Sicily as Romans and even as preeminent among them.

²⁴³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 181.

²⁴⁴ Psuedo Al-Waqidi in *BAS* I, 331-338.

The Arabic sources also describe an imperial concern for the situation on Sicily that is similar to the Roman narratives. Ibn al-Athir and al-Nuwayri, for example, both record the fall of the important Sicilian city of Castrogiovanni. These sources not only display the Romanness of many Sicilians, but also show that those closer to the imperial center paid attention to what was happening in the Sicilian province. Ibn al-Athir recounts the effect that the capture of Castrogiovanni had on the imperial court. He writes that the conquest of the city greatly humiliated the polytheists (i.e. the Christians) and that when the Romans notified the emperor of this defeat, he sent a large fleet and army to the island in response.²⁴⁵ For Ibn al-Athir, the inhabitants of the island were the responsibility of the emperor in Constantinople and local events led to a physical response from the Constantinopolitan court.

The connection between Sicily and Constantinople is even more evident in Ibn al-Athir's account of the capture of Taormina in 902, the last imperially controlled territory in Sicily. According to this author, following the arrival of the news that Taormina had been captured, the king of the Rum refused to wear his crown for seven days out of deep sadness over the loss of the city.²⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athir adds that to recover from this misfortune the Rum began preparation for a new expedition to Sicily. The author makes a clear association between the city and the responsibility of the emperor, who had failed to defend Taormina and now expressed great dismay over its loss. By including this anecdote in his account of the capture of Taormina, Ibn al-Athir reinforces the significance that a single Sicilian city could have for the imperial court in Constantinople. The Arabic sources interpret the welfare of the Roman Sicilians to be the responsibility of the emperor in Constantinople. Thus, during the period in which the Muslims and Romans contended over the

²⁴⁵ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 380.

²⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 394.

island of Sicily, it was still possible for observers both beyond and within the island to envision many of the inhabitants of Sicily as members of the Roman community.

Romans in Muslim Sicily (902-962)

The capture of Taormina in 902 essentially brought an end to Roman rule on the island of Sicily and after this event, Roman sources cease to express affinity with a Roman population on the island. This is despite the continued existence of large communities of Greek-speaking Christians, as well as several Roman attempts to re-conquer the island. For instance, the emperor Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos, in his *De administrando imperio*, has very little to say about the people who inhabited Sicily. He recalls how there used to be a patrician responsible for governing Sicily, Calabria, Naples, and some of the other lands in Italy, and then notes that “all these countries aforesaid used to be inhabited by the Romans (αὗται δὲ πᾶσαι αἱ προρηθεῖσαι χώραι κατοκοῦντο παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων).”²⁴⁷ The acknowledgement that Sicily used to be inhabited by Romans but had ceased to be so only 40 years after the loss of Taormina is especially noteworthy given the great lengths to which this text goes to express, and even invent, an image of Roman continuity in other territories that had been separated from the Roman state – including the regions listed above.²⁴⁸ Such a statement indicates a break between the history of the island and the story of the Roman people that has been presented up to this point. While Sicily, or parts of it, remained under the administration of Constantinople, the sources could identify a Roman population on the island. After the end of imperial control, it appears that there were no longer Romans to be found in this place according to the view of Konstantinos.

²⁴⁷ Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos, *De administrando imperio* 27.9-13.

²⁴⁸ For more on this, see the discussion in chapter 3.

Konstantinos' note in the *De administrando imperio* becomes even more pertinent when compared with the description of Sicily in another of his works, the *De thematibus*. Konstantinos begins his description of the province of Sicily by simply stating that "the island of Sicily is great and most-famous."²⁴⁹ He then makes a rather puzzling and erroneous claim that even now the island is "under the control of the rule of Constantinople (κρατεῖται δὲ νῦν ὑπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως)."²⁵⁰ Perhaps this statement from Konstantinos is merely a continuation of the sentiment expressed only lines above, which discusses the ancient transfer of authority of the island from Rome to Constantinople. Whatever the reasoning, the assertion of Roman rule over Sicily is very soon afterward contradicted. After Konstantinos recounts the mythical and earlier Roman history of the island, he writes that Syracuse, Taormina, Agrigento, and the other famous cities were abandoned (ἡρημωμένας) because of the Muslims. This statement is the closest Konstantinos came to speaking about a present-day population of the island, instead of the cities and peoples of mythical antiquity. Although he was certainly aware of the island's long Roman past, he does not make any reference to the Romans, or Christians for that matter, who lived there in the present. Like in the *De administrando imperio*, he writes of the cities as though they were deserted by their Roman inhabitants.

It should not be assumed that Konstantinos's silence indicates that he believed that the countryside remained under Roman control, or at least independent of the Muslims, because he specifically refers to the cities as being abandoned.²⁵¹ The text makes no such allusion and, in fact, Konstantinos later adds that only Calabria was still in the hands of Christians (μόνη δὲ ἀντιπερὶν

²⁴⁹ Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennitos, *De thematibus* 10.1.

²⁵⁰ Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennitos, *De thematibus* 10.5-6; Pertusi calls such claims as a matter "soltanto l'ostentazione bizantina." A. Pertusi, *Costantino Porfirogenito de Thematibus: Introduzione, Testo Critico, Commento* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1952), 180.

²⁵¹ Koutrakou, "The Eye of Constantinople," 27-28.

ἡ Καλαβρία κρατεῖται παρὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν).²⁵² Konstantinos' conception of Sicily as an island devoid of Romans is also contradicted by the Arabic sources, which are presented below. The description of the state of affairs in Sicily in these works may reflect the fact that the loss of Syracuse occurred during the reign of his grandfather, Basileios, and the fall of Taormina occurred under his father, Leon VI. Therefore, it is possible that the silence and uncertainty concerning the fate of Sicilian-Romans in his works results from a desire to keep attention away from the failures of his imperial forebears and is not an accurate representation of how Konstantinos actually understood the fate of Sicilian Romans.

The differences between the Arab and Roman sources in the years following the Muslim conquest of the island nuance our understanding of Roman identity on Sicily. The scope of the Roman community for Roman authors does not appear to have included the inhabitants of Sicily. They either did not envision an extant Sicilian Roman community living beyond the control of the Roman state or they ignore its existence in order to avoid portraying the imperial court in a negative light. Arabic authors, who continued to express the affinity between the Rum of Sicily and Constantinople, may be more accurate observers of shared notions of Romanness than the Roman authors.

Ibn al-Athir writes that after the leader of the Muslim army, Ibrahim, had taken Taormina, he scattered his army throughout the island to capture the territories still held by the Rum.²⁵³ Ibn al-Athir then describes another set of raids in the late 940s ordered against all of the towns of the island and against the Romans of nearby Calabria.²⁵⁴ The series of campaigns against Calabria was only ended by the intervention of the Roman emperor and the provision that a mosque in Reggio

²⁵² Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennitos, *De thematibus* 10.36-40.

²⁵³ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 394.

²⁵⁴ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 412.

be constructed for Muslim prisoners.²⁵⁵ At the same time as the attacks on Calabria, campaigns were launched on parts of Sicily still inhabited by Romans, of whom an unspecified group sought the aid of the emperor in Constantinople.²⁵⁶ This report makes evident that the Arabic sources continued to perceive the existence of a Roman population on Sicily, and so did that Roman population itself, during approximately the same period that the emperor Konstantinos VII writes that the island had been left bereft of any Romans. The Arabic sources still believe that there is a relationship between the Romans of Sicily and the emperor in Constantinople, even after the Muslims had taken control of the island. The extant Roman sources do not express this connection, even though the opportunity to do so was available.

The contrast between the Roman and Arabic sources is further demonstrated by a local Sicilian text known as the *Cambridge Chronicle*.²⁵⁷ It has been posited that this text, which records aspects of the history of Sicily beginning with the arrival of the Muslims in 827, was authored in the tenth or eleventh century by a Greek-speaking Christian. Such a text has the potential to provide insight into how this population identified itself in the generations following the Muslim conquest of Sicily, but the *Cambridge Chronicle* is terse and neutral in its tone. It essentially narrates the Muslim conquests from 827 to 964 (when the text cuts off), and it places the record of each captured city in the passive voice. This text is quite succinct even for major events that are memorialized with much detail in other accounts. For example, the author simply writes that in 858 Castrogiovanni was captured.²⁵⁸ The author provides little personal perspective as to the narrative of this chronicle or to the views of the peoples included in his text. A few

²⁵⁵ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 421.

²⁵⁶ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 422.

²⁵⁷ On this text, see Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 342-343 and Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani* I, 66-67. See also, C. La Rosa, "The Cambridge Chronicle: Some Linguistic Features," in *Multilingual and Multigraphic Documents and Manuscripts of East and West*, eds. G. Mandalà and I. Pérez Martín (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2018), 159-177.

²⁵⁸ Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 346.

references are made to the Muslims as “Saracens” and “barbarians,” but without any obvious prejudice or derogation. The Romans could use this kind of language to express “in” and “out” groups, but the author of this text makes no explicit self-expressions of personal identity. Likewise, the author conveys no praise of or affiliation with the island’s Christian communities. The chronological parameters of the chronicle are certainly intriguing. It begins with the arrival of the Muslim army on the island in 827 and ends with arrival of a large army sent from Constantinople in 964, which was apparently “ignobly” defeated. But the text breaks off here and it is unclear whether this was purposeful or if the chronicle would have extended further. Thus, it is difficult to say with any certainty what might have been the programmatic intention.

The original Greek text was not long after translated into Arabic and this version contains some notable inclusions. Although the Arabic version of the text also does not provide access into how the original author understood his own community, it may allow for some insight into how the Muslims perceived Greek-speaking Sicilians. The translator likewise begins with the purpose of the text. That is, he set out to chronicle the history of the island from the arrival of the Muslim army in 827. However, he clarifies that this form of dating was in accordance with the calendrical system used by the Rum in their writings. The precise definition of Rum can be variable, but this may mean that the translator assumed that that original text was authored by a Roman. A similar inference is seen later in the chronicle in the description of a battle that occurred in the 930s. The Greek-language version of this text states that in this battle “thousands of Christians were killed.”²⁵⁹ A modern translator of this text substitutes the “Christians” for “Greeks,” but the contemporary Arabic translator of the chronicle instead writes that thousands of Rum were killed. Again, the Arabic version of the chronicle potentially places the events of

²⁵⁹ Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I, 345.

the narrative within a Roman framework. These examples suggest that the Muslim translator identified the Greek-speaking Christians of Sicily as part of the community of Romans in the decades following the capture of Taormina in 902 and perhaps even into the eleventh century in contrast to the contemporary Roman historians, who make no such acknowledgment.

Romans and Imperial Intervention in Sicily (post 962)

How the Roman and Arabic sources perceived the Romanness of Sicily is perhaps best demonstrated by their very different accounts of the rebellion of the cities of Taormina and Rometta in the 960s. As discussed above, the capture of Taormina in 902 signaled what was effectively the end of direct Roman control over any part of Sicily, but this city and Rometta (along with a few others) remained in a state of semi-autonomy. Ibn al-Athir records that in 963 the Sicilian emir Ahmad captured the fortress of Taormina, which was held by the Rum.²⁶⁰ After he had accomplished this, he turned to the city of Rometta, which was likewise held by the Rum.²⁶¹ Ibn al-Athir then states that the Rum of this city were so afraid by this turn of events that they sent messengers to the king in Constantinople explaining their condition and asking for aid. Ibn Khaldun advances this sentiment even further, stating that the inhabitants of Rometta asked for help from “their king.”²⁶² Some scholars have connected this appeal to Constantinople on the basis of the shared Christian religion of the members of the embassy and the imperial court, but the Arabic sources describe these participants as Romans and, as has been demonstrated above, they could distinguish between the religious and ethnic aspects of Roman identity. They make this distinction elsewhere in the narrative. The authors refer to the Roman army that came to the

²⁶⁰ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 424.

²⁶¹ Ibn al-Athir in *BAS* I, 425.

²⁶² Ibn Khaldun in *BAS* II, 169.

aid of Rometta and they isolated the Mugûs (Norman), Armenian, and Rus components of it.²⁶³

The Arabic historians understand the relationship between the Romans of Sicily and the Romans of Constantinople, much like the Romans themselves did when the island was under their direct control.

Roman historians also record the expedition sent to Sicily in 964, but they represent these events quite differently and they say nothing about a supposed call for aid from the people of Rometta.²⁶⁴ These authors likely would have had access to information about the city of Rometta. Refugees or released slaves, including Ioannes Sikeliotes (a teacher of rhetoric), made their way to Constantinople.²⁶⁵ Leon the Deacon, probably erroneously, describes a much more successful Roman campaign that included the capture of Sicilian towns such as Syracuse, Himera, Leontini, and Taormina.²⁶⁶ In his account, he does not mention the motivations for this expedition or the appeal from Rometta. Leon also makes no reference to the island's Greek-speaking Christian population, even though the Roman army landed on the part of the island where this population was most heavily concentrated.²⁶⁷ Instead, Leon only uses the term "Sicilian" to refer to the island's "barbarian" and "Hagarene" population.²⁶⁸ The historian Skylitzes likewise refers to the Muslims of Sicily in this way, at one point seemingly

²⁶³ Al-Nuwayri in *BAS* II, 131.

²⁶⁴ This expedition is also briefly referenced by the author of the *Life of Our Holy Father Nikephoros the Monk and Bishop of Miletos* 10. The author indicates that he is from this city (κατὰ γὰρ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἄστυ τὰ δράματα γέγονεν), presumably Rometta. Papaioannou argues that the author may be Ioannes Sikeliotes. See S. Papaioannou, "Sicily, Constantinople, Miletos: The Life of a Eunuch and the History of Byzantine Humanism," *Myriobiblos Essays on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, eds. T. Antonopoulou, S. Kotzabassi and M. Loukaki (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 261-284.

²⁶⁵ Papaioannou, "Ioannes Sikeliotes (and Ioannes Geometres) Revisited. With an Appendix: Edition of Sikeliotes' Scholia on Aelius Aristides," *T&MByz* 23 (2019): 659-692.

²⁶⁶ Leo the Deacon, *History* 4.7-8.

²⁶⁷ For a discussion on the settlement patterns of Sicily during this period, see L. Arcifa, "Byzantine Sicily," in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 472-495.

²⁶⁸ Leo the Deacon, *History* 4.8.

distinguishing them from the Muslims of north Africa whom he calls Carthaginians.²⁶⁹ Neither historian expresses an ethnic affinity between the Romans and inhabitants of Sicily.

Skylitzes' account provides some more detail concerning this campaign and the author even offers a reasoning for the attack on Sicily, though here too the appeal of Rometta is absent. Skylitzes claims that the reason for this expedition was that the emperor Nikephoros Phokas wished to put an end to the tribute paid to the emirate of Sicily.²⁷⁰ He then clarifies the causes for these payments and describes a brief and somewhat inaccurate overview of the Muslim conquest in the ninth century. He writes that the cities of the island were destroyed with the exception of Palermo, a claim somewhat similar to those made by Konstantinos in the *De administrando imperio* and *De thematibus*. After this summation, he emphasizes again that the reason for this campaign was that the emperor found it "indecent to pay tribute to the Saracens."²⁷¹ Neither Leon the Deacon nor Skylitzes reference the supposed appeal of Rometta recorded by the Arabic historians, but whether or not this call for aid actually occurred is less important than the difference in the way these two groups of sources report the reason for the Roman campaign. For the Arabic accounts this is a story of the Romans and their relationship with Constantinople, but for the Romans themselves this is simply a failed campaign against the "barbarians" of Sicily.

Maniakes' campaign in the eleventh century is the final event to draw so closely the attention of Roman historians to the island of Sicily. In 1038, the Roman general Georgios Maniakes arrived in Sicily, after the Romans were called to offer their support to one of the island's two warring factions. Once again, the Roman sources are mostly silent concerning the island's Greek-speaking Christians. But, in this case, they are accompanied by several Latin

²⁶⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 266 and perhaps again at 400.

²⁷⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 262.

²⁷¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 267.

accounts that narrate the involvement of the Normans from southern Italy in the campaign. Two writers, Amatus of Montecassino and Geoffrey Malaterra, include an account of the expedition in their respective works. Both texts are mostly interested in elevating the accomplishments of the Norman contingent and its leadership, while simultaneously diminishing the role of Maniakes and the Romans.²⁷² However, they do make several references to the Greek-speaking population of Sicily. Amatus usually refers to the Romans as “Greeks” throughout his narrative, but when he wrote about Sicily, he uses more religious distinctions. He presents the war as one between Christians and Muslims, in part to criticize the Romans for having allowed Christians to live under Muslim rule, as well as to make a contrast between Christianity and Islam. When he refers to Christians of Sicily, such as a particular priest in Syracuse or those who greeted the army as it marched through the island, it is probable that he is speaking about “Greeks,” but he does not do so explicitly.

Malaterra, on the other hand, represents the Greek-speaking Christians of Sicily similar to those that he writes about in other regions of the Roman state.²⁷³ Like Amatus, Malaterra calls the Romans “Greeks (Greci),” which was how this group was usually identified in the Latin west. For example, he describes Maniakes as “a Greek by birth” and elsewhere he employs the stereotype of Greek perfidy.²⁷⁴ Malaterra uses the same kind of language when describing the Greek-speaking Christians of Sicily. He calls them “Greeks” throughout his account and applies

²⁷² T. Smit, “Pagans and Infidels, Saracens and Sicilians: Identifying Muslims in the Eleventh-Century Chronicles of Norman Italy,” in *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History* 21, ed. W. North (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 67-86; G. Palombo, “The Normans of Sicily from ‘the Other Side’: The Medieval Arabic Sources,” in *Sicily and the Mediterranean: Migration, Exchange, Reinvention*, ed. C. Karagoz and G. Summerfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 29-30.

²⁷³ Metcalfe notes the potential disconnect between how authors such as Amatus refer to this population, as opposed to how this population may have defined itself. However, it is clear that Amatus believed that this group was analogous to the other “Greeks,” whether or not he is correct in this assertion. Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 27.

²⁷⁴ Geoffrey Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard* 1.7-8.

to them the same prejudice of perfidy.”²⁷⁵ Malaterra does not distinguish between the “Greeks” of Sicily and those who accompanied Maniakes, and he understands them as sharing the same collective identity.

The Roman writers, who were mostly concerned with Maniakes and the failure of his successors in the war, do not have much to say about the inhabitants of Sicily or any potential connection to its Greek-speaking inhabitants. The historian Attaleiates simply laments the failure of the campaign, since if it had succeeded “that island would now be under Roman rule.”²⁷⁶ Skylitzes, however, makes two references that may be about the Greek-speaking population.²⁷⁷ First, he explains that each time Maniakes would conquer a city, he would immediately afterward construct a citadel to keep the local people (οἱ ἐγγόριοι) from retaking the city.²⁷⁸ The parts of the island in which Maniakes campaigned housed the largest groups of Greek-speaking Christians on Sicily and it is possible that this is the population that he is referring to. Maniakes’ concerns were apparently substantiated. After the forced departure of Maniakes from the island, the local people (again - οἱ ἐγγόριοι) allied themselves with some “Carthaginians” and attacked the cities.²⁷⁹ Skylitzes differentiates the “local people” from the “Carthaginians,” which is the name he uses to indicate the Muslims of north Africa who conquered Sicily. It is not conclusive “who” exactly Skylitzes has in mind when describing the local inhabitants of Sicily, as he applies no ethnonym to them. He may simply be referring to the Muslim inhabitants of Sicily. Malaterra, however, similarly mentions that unspecified citizens of Syracuse contented with imperial

²⁷⁵ Geoffrey Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard* 2.29.

²⁷⁶ Michael Attaleiates, *History* 3.1.

²⁷⁷ On this account and some of its problems, see J. Shephard, “Byzantium's Last Sicilian Expedition: Skylitzes' Testimony,” *RSBN* 14/16 (1977): 145-159.

²⁷⁸ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 406.

²⁷⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 406.

army.²⁸⁰ Later, local “Greeks” of the town of Troina fought with the Muslims against the Norman invasion of Sicily.²⁸¹ If Skylitzes is referring to similar circumstances, he makes no indication that he perceives the “local people” to be fellow Romans despite their potentially similar cultural profile. Skylitzes, writing in the middle of the eleventh century, finds the local population of parts of Sicily, however he interprets them, as group that was suspect and hostile to the Romans.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, it was possible to see evidence that some of those living in a formerly Roman territory associated themselves with their new rulers and were excluded by those Romans living outside of Crete. The sources notice the adoption of a new religion and different customs, as well as a willingness to participate in and contribute to the newly formed emirate. They assume that the entirety of Crete (or close to the entirety) was now a “land of barbarians” and a place that needed to be forcibly and carefully re-integrated, despite any ostensible similarities with some members of the local population.

Those Romans who wrote about Sicily say little about such developments among the Roman population.²⁸² They do not record conversions to Islam, changes in *mores*, or participation in the society of Muslim Sicily. This, of course, is not to say that such developments did not occur. The Arabic sources refer to the slaves taken from their attacks on Roman towns, likely leading to a large population of Roman slaves and *mawali*.²⁸³ The aforementioned Fatimid

²⁸⁰ Geoffrey Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard* 1.7.

²⁸¹ Geoffrey Malaterra, *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his brother Duke Robert Guiscard* 2.29.

²⁸² Arabic references are not much fuller, though it is generally suggested by modern scholars that the Greek-speaking Christian community slowly and unevenly assimilating into Muslim-Sicilian society. Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 23; Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 109-110.

²⁸³ See, for example, al-Nuwayri in *BAS* II, 118-122 and Ibn Idhari in *BAS* II, 6-10. On the existence of Sicilian *mawali*, see Granara, *Narrating Muslims Sicily*, 148.

general Jawhar, sometimes called al-Rumi or al-Siqilli, is one example of an individual who, like Photios of Crete, was able to find success in the service of a non-Roman state. Some Arabic sources refer directly to the conversion of the Christian population. Often cited is the mostly negative account of Sicily written by ibn Hawqal in the later part of the tenth century. He laments that the island's Muslim population lived far too comfortably with their Christian counterparts and even allowed themselves to marry Christian women, provided that any sons could be raised as Muslims.²⁸⁴ Likewise in the tenth century, al-Istakhri recognizes that not all of the Sicilians had converted to Islam and that a small number of them still remained Christian.²⁸⁵ Yaqut al-Hamawi reflects that the majority of the island's Christians had converted to Islam before the conquest of Sicily led by Robert Guiscard.²⁸⁶ Moreover, the Muslims of Sicily occasionally had difficulty incorporating Romans into their state. They contended with the rebellious and semi-autonomous enclaves of the people whom they knew as the Rum, even after imperial control of Sicily came to an end. Al-Nuwayri writes that upon the victory over the cities of Taormina and Rometta, their fortifications were destroyed, presumably to keep them from attempting further rebellions.²⁸⁷ It has been suggested that these campaigns were part of a broader policy to more forcefully integrate those Romans still living in a state of semi-autonomy by placing them under the direct control of the emirate.²⁸⁸ Some of the extant tax registers from the eleventh and twelfth centuries demonstrate changes in naming practices, including a few examples of Sicilians

²⁸⁴ See the discussion in Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 16-17; Granara, *Narrating Muslim Sicily*, 41-44; Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 131-134.

²⁸⁵ See reference in Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met*, 131.

²⁸⁶ Yaqut al-Hamawi in *BAS* I, 202-203.

²⁸⁷ Al-Nuwayri in *BAS* II, 135.

²⁸⁸ E. Kislinger and F. Maurici, "Rometta nel contesto del conflitto arabo-bizantino (IX-X sec.): Topografia e monumenti, storia e geopolitica," *RSBN* 51 (2014): 97-136.

On this interpretation of events and the difficulty of the sources, see Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 21-22.

with Arabic first names whose parents bore popular Roman names.²⁸⁹ The above evidence suggests that many of the descendants of Romans came to associate themselves with their Sicilian Muslim counterparts.

As for the Greek-speaking Christians who inhabited Sicily in the centuries after Roman rule, it is difficult to observe the extent to which they continued to identify with a larger Roman ethnic group. The *Cambridge Chronicle*, which may provide a local voice, is not particularly revealing. Likewise, many of the hagiographies of Sicilian and southern Italian saints express their differences with the Muslims of Sicily in strictly religious terms.²⁹⁰ What is evident, however, is that contemporary Roman authors no longer unproblematically considered the inhabitants of Sicily to be members of a larger community of Romans nor did they continue to include them in the shared history of the Romans. The sources do not highlight the adoption of new customs or changes in worship, but instead show a pattern of only referring to Romans while they lived within Romanía. In other words, as Roman Sicily waned, so too did the acknowledgement of a Sicilian Roman population. For “outsiders,” such as the Muslims and the Normans, Romans remain an identifiable group in Sicily. For the Romans, the Roman people and Roman territory are essentially coterminous.

This uncertainty towards those living beyond the borders of the Romans state, even those who might maintain characteristics often associated with being Roman, is exemplified in the tenth century *Life of St. Elias the Younger*. Saint Elias was born Ioannes Rachites and was raised in the important Sicilian town of Castrogiovanni in the 820s. The disciple who composed this biography shortly after the saint’s death in the late ninth century, writes that Elias was Sicilian by

²⁸⁹ Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily*, 85-95.

²⁹⁰ Peters-Custot, “Le barbare et l’étranger dans l’Italie méridionale pré-normande (IXe-Xe siècles): l’Empire à l’épreuve de l’altérité,” in *Le barbare, l’étranger. Images de l’autre*, eds. D. Nourrisson and Y. Perrin (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2004), 147-163.

genos (τῷ γένει Σικελιώτης).²⁹¹ This does not necessarily indicate that the hagiographer understood the saint to be of a *genos* distinct from the Romans.²⁹² The term was sometimes used to indicate one's province of origin.²⁹³ Nevertheless, the *Life* depicts Elias as an individual who occupied a space between the Roman and Muslim worlds. It documents the saint's extensive travels through the Muslim held parts of the Mediterranean and his interactions with the inhabitants of these places. For example, the saint explained the theology of the trinity to "Saracen" sailors on a journey to north Africa and became famous in a Muslim community for his teachings and prophecy.²⁹⁴ The *Life* also depicts the saint as an important figure within the Roman world. Elias became well-known for his prophesizing, including a prediction to some Christians, perhaps from the city of Palermo, that in an upcoming battle there would be a "victory of the Romans and defeat of the Hagarenes (τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων νίκην καὶ τὴν τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν ἀπώλειαν)."²⁹⁵ The *Life* states that Elias eventually attracted the attention of the most pious emperor Leon VI (εὐσεβέστατος βασιλεὺς Λέων), who at one point "asked that the saint pray for both the empire and the political community of the Romans (ἐμήνυνεν αὐτῷ ὑπερεὔχεσθαι τῆς βασιλείας καὶ τοῦ παντὸς πολιτεύματος)."²⁹⁶ The hagiographer envisions Elias as an acknowledged participant of the Roman community.

However, the *Life* also includes a brief anecdote in which the saint was temporarily excluded by some Romans. After many years away from the island of Sicily, and at some time

²⁹¹ *The Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 3.

²⁹² Another tenth century Sicilian saint, Vitale, is described as *natione Siculus* in the *Life of Saint Vitale*, 4.

²⁹³ Kaldellis, "Provincial Identities in Byzantium," in *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium*, eds. M.E. Stewart, D. A. Parnell, and C. Whately (New York: Routledge, 2022), 248-262.

²⁹⁴ *Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 23 and 16-17.

²⁹⁵ *Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 25 and further predictions in 32.

²⁹⁶ *Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 48. Leo is elsewhere referred to as our Christ-loving emperor (ὁ φιλόχριστος ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς) in *Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 25. Romans could distinguish between the *basileia* and the *politeia*, or republic, "the political sphere oriented toward the collective good of the Roman people." See Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*, 38-42.

following the Muslim conquest of Syracuse in 878, the saint returned to visit his mother in Palermo. He then traveled throughout the interior of the island, gathered some new disciples, and prepared to depart for the town of Bouthroto in Epiros. Upon his arrival there, he and his followers were arrested by a local magistrate upon the charge of espionage. This official called these travelers “Hagerenes (Ἀγαρηνοὺς) who were “profane (βεβήλους)” and “spies of the cities (κατασκόπους τῶν πόλεων).”²⁹⁷ The saint asked the man that he not make such accusations against “foreign monks (τοὺς ξένους μοναχοὺς),” but he was unable to convince the official and was subsequently imprisoned. The purpose of this story is likely to emphasize the saint’s power as an intermediary to the divine and to show that after all these years of travel in foreign lands the saint had lost his Roman appearance. The saint placed a curse upon the local official, who soon afterward died in an accident, and those who heard the saint’s words petitioned for his release from imprisonment. What is more important for the purposes of this study, is that the hagiographer assumed that his audience would find it reasonable that a Roman official would lay such charges against Elias. This saint, who departed from the predominately Muslim controlled island of Sicily and had spent much of his life traveling through Muslim held lands, arrived in the Roman territory of Epiros and was immediately accused of being a Muslim spy. For this magistrate, much like the Roman writers discussed in this chapter, it seems that those who lived beyond the borders of Romanía, even those who ostensibly shared the Roman religion and language, were potentially an object of anxiety and not so easily recognized as Romans.

²⁹⁷ *Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 28. On Roman spies and intelligence gathering, see Koutrakou, “Diplomacy and Espionage: Their Role in Byzantine Foreign Relations, 8th-10th Centuries,” *Graeco-Arabica* 6 (1995): 125–44; “Spies of Towns: Some Remarks on Espionage in the Context of Arab-Byzantine Relations,” *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (2000): 243-66; Shepard, “Imperial Information and Ignorance: A Discrepancy,” *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995): 107–16.

CHAPTER 3: Southern Italy

The reign of emperor Basileios I (867-886) marked a strengthening of the Roman presence in southern Italy and a substantial increase to the extent of the territories under imperial control in the region. By this time, Roman southern Italy had long been threatened by intermittent warfare with the Lombards, particularly with those who established a duchy based in Benevento in 571.²⁹⁸ In the early ninth century, Roman boundaries had been confined to the southernmost parts of Calabria and Apulia with the exception of several Campanian cities, which were effectively autonomous despite being nominally under Roman authority.²⁹⁹ The situation was further exacerbated by the establishment of the Muslim emirate at Bari (847-871), which contended with both the Romans and Lombards.³⁰⁰ In 876, the Romans regained the city of Bari and the general Nikephoros Phokas “the Elder” conquered much of Apulia and northern Calabria in the 880s.³⁰¹ These successes stabilized the Roman position in meridional Italy and ultimately

²⁹⁸ On the establishment of the Lombard states, and their warfare and relationship with the Romans, see: B.M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991). See also the survey in F. Marazzi, “Byzantines and Lombards,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 169-199; and P. Delogu, “Lombard and Carolingian Italy,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 290-319.

²⁹⁹ Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 1-17. T.S. Brown, “Byzantine Italy,” 320-348; “The Background of Byzantine Relation with Italy in the Ninth Century: Legacies, Attachments and Antagonisms,” in *Byzantium and the West, c. 850 - c. 1200 : proceedings of the XVIII Spring Symposium of Byzantine studies, Oxford, 30th March - 1st April*, ed. J. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988): 27-45; G. Noyé, “Les premiers siècles de la domination,” in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine: acquis et nouvelles recherches*, eds. A. Jacob, J.M. Martin et G. Noyé (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006), 445-469. For a survey of the Campanian cities of Naples and Gaeta, including their relationship with the Romans, see Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 405-433.

³⁰⁰ Nef, “Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy.”; L.M. Bondioli, “Islamic Bari between the Aghlabids and the Two Empires,” in *The Aghlabids and Their Neighbors: Art and Material Culture in Ninth-Century North Africa*, eds. G.D. Anderson, C. Fenwick, and M. Rosser-Owen (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 470-490; M. Giosuè, *L'Emirato Di Bari, 847-871* (Bari: Dedalo Litostampa, 1964).

³⁰¹ For this series of campaigns and the territories brought under Roman control, including the brief occupation of Benevento from 891-895, see von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI secolo* (Bari: Ecumenica Editrice, 1978), 20-25; S. Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina (VI-XI secolo), Da Giustiniano ai Normanni* (Bologna: Bologna University Press, 2008), 26-28; S. Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912): Politics and People* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 204; S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign: a Study of Tenth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 178-180.

led to the creation of new administrative units, such as the theme of Langobardia in the late ninth century, which was later reorganized as the catepanate of Italy in the late tenth century.³⁰²

Calabria, which for a time remained under the authority of the theme of Sicily and housed its *strategos* in Rhegion after the fall of Taormina in 902, finally emerged as a distinct theme in the middle of the tenth century.³⁰³ The short-lived theme of Lucania (in the modern-day region of Basilicata) was formed in between the other two Italian themes at some point between the middle of the tenth century and the middle of the eleventh century.³⁰⁴ It was through this arrangement, although not always as neatly or as regularly as is summarized here, that the Romans governed southern Italy until the Norman conquest of Bari in 1071, which effectively brought Roman rule on the peninsula to an end.

A study of Roman southern Italy in this period, particularly from the reign of Basileios I to Konstantinos VII, provides a different perspective than the previous chapters on Roman perceptions of those living at the borders of the state. Similar to the re-conquest of Crete, the Roman state recovered territories that had been historically under Roman authority and, in the aftermath of these campaigns, there was an attempt to conceptualize how these conquered

³⁰² There has been much debate on the precise establishment and administration of each of the Italian themes. See On Langobardia and the Catepanate, von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI*, 5-107; Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina*, 27-28; Zuckerman, "Squabbling Protospatharioi and Other Administrative Issues from the First Half of the Tenth Century," *REByz* 72 (2014): 193-233; J.M. Martin, "Les thèmes italiens: territoire, administration, population," in eds. A. Jacob, J.M. Martin et G. Noyé (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006), 517-558. On this period, see G.A. Loud, "Southern Italy in the 10th Century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III c. 900 - c. 1024*, ed. T. Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 624-645.

³⁰³ Prigent, "La politique sicilienne de Romain I^{er} Lécapène," in *Guerre et société au Moyen Âge Byzance – Occident (viii^e – xiii^e siècle)*, eds. D. Barthélemy and J.C. Cheynet (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2010), 63-84; Zuckerman, "Squabbling Protospatharioi and Other Administrative Issues from the First Half of the Tenth Century," 209-210.

³⁰⁴ von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI*, 65-75. Guillou ascribes an earlier date to the creation of Lucania, in either 968 or 969. See Guillou, "La Lucanie byzantine: Étude de géographie historique," *Byzantion* 35 (1965): 119-149. For a list of the governors of each of these individual themes and of the catepanate, see von Falkenhausen, *Untersuchungen über die byzantinische Herrschaft in Süditalien vom 9. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1967), 74-104. See also Peters-Custot, "Les communautés grecques de Basilicate à l'époque byzantine," in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine*, eds. A. Jacob, J.M. Martin et G. Noyé (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006).

territories and their inhabitants fit into the Roman state. However, in southern Italy, large populations of Romans and non-Romans existed in near vicinity of one another and did so both within the boundaries of the Roman provinces and beyond them. The sources pay more attention to this arrangement than did those who wrote about Crete and Sicily. An analysis of how the sources represent the relationship between the inhabitants of southern Italy and the Roman state, as well as what is known of the imperial administrative arrangement over the Italian themes, reveals that there were different levels of belonging to the Roman community. In the view of the sources composed by the court in Constantinople, Romans and non-Romans were distinguished from one another despite their common loyalty to the state and they experienced different relationships with and governance from the Roman state in accordance with that distinction.

Moreover, despite the initial successes of these expeditions and the formation of new themes, much of southern Italy that had been formerly Roman territory remained beyond the control of the contemporary Roman state. The imperial propaganda of the Macedonian dynasty attempted to provide an explanation for this inconvenient fact, in a way that creatively reimagined the Roman past of southern Italy to articulate continual adherence to an ancient Roman order and a restoration of that order where it may have lapsed. Thus, this chapter examines the Constantinopolitan attitude toward the recognizably multi-ethnic nature of southern Italy and the historical memory of the peninsula's Roman past, investigating the conceptual framework through which the court viewed the inhabitants of the Roman provinces and those previously Roman lands that remained just beyond them.

The Romanness of Southern Italy

In contrast to the scholarship of Sicily and Crete during this period, there has been much attention paid to conceptions of ethnicity and Romanness in southern Italy, as well as to the relationships maintained between the people of this region and the east Roman state.³⁰⁵ Many of these studies have made use primarily of Latin language sources and approached these topics from the perspective of those texts. These scholars have demonstrated that Latin sources most often associate Romanness with those living under the contemporary Roman republic of Saint Peter and with those who occupied a more distant imperial Roman past. This viewpoint has been frequently shared by modern scholars of southern Italy who have tended to adopt the same terminology as these sources and therefore thought of the region of east Roman Italy in terms of being “Greek” or “Byzantine” in its character.³⁰⁶ The persistent usage of “Greek” as the preferred ethnonym for this population makes use of an artificial categorization imposed upon it by others, both modern and ancient, which this population only employed in limited circumstances.³⁰⁷ Such language unintentionally has suggested a perception of ethnic continuity among the Greek-speaking population of southern Italy since before the Roman period and well after, thereby concealing the ways that ethnic identifications may have changed over time. References to “Italo-Greek” communities have also encouraged the sense that southern Italy and its inhabitants

³⁰⁵ Berto has published several studies on this topic. See, for example, Berto, “The Image of the Byzantines in Early Medieval South Italy.” See also Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 11-14. On Romanness, T. Granier, “Rome and Romanness in Latin Southern Italian Sources, 8th–10th Centuries,” in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 217-230; G. Vocino, “Looking up to Rome: Romanness through the Hagiography from the Duchy of Spoleto,” in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018): 197-215.

³⁰⁶ In the Latin sources, “Greek,” or *Greci*, is the most common ethnonym used to designate the Greek-speaking Orthodox population of southern Italy, though others are at times used. Some studies have recognized that these sources impose inexact ethnic categories (both Latin and Greek) on the peoples of southern Italy. See, Peters-Custot, “Grecs et Byzantins dans les sources latines de l’Italie (ix^e-xi^e siècle),” in *Société des historiens médiévistes de l’Enseignement supérieur public. Nation et nations au Moyen Âge: XLIV^e Congrès de la SHMESP (Prague, 23 mai-26 mai 2013)*. (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2014), 181-191.

³⁰⁷ On the use of Graikos and Hellene by Romans in certain contexts, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, esp. 334-345.

were in some way especially distinct from the rest of Romanía by the time of the ninth century and not members of a larger community of Romans.

Likewise, there are a number of studies on the salience of Romanness in southern Italy that have approached this subject primarily through the Greek-language literature.³⁰⁸ These analyses must contend with the sporadic attention placed on the Italian peninsula by Roman historical texts, making it necessary to rely on only a handful of narratives.³⁰⁹ The relative scarcity of literary material written in Greek for certain periods and specific parts of southern Italy is in some ways offset by a relatively large hagiographic corpus.³¹⁰ However, several features characteristic of this body of evidence have their own implications for the study of Romanness in southern Italy. It has been argued that because of the geographic proximity of these saints and their hagiographers to the city of Rome, these texts were more influenced by a western rhetoric of Romanness, potentially affecting the terminology of Roman ethnicity and the self-perception of the “Italo-Greeks.”³¹¹ Lastly, the understanding of Romanness simply as a political identity, in which one’s Romanness is derived solely from one’s status as subject to the emperor in Constantinople and is not constitutive of an ethnic identity, likewise has appeared

³⁰⁸ For a survey of the ethnic profile of this region, see Martin, *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993), 489-531; Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 222-224; Guillou, “Italie méridionale byzantine ou Byzantins en Italie méridionale,” *Byzantion* 44 (1974): 153-158; and “E l’Italia bizantina douleia e oikeiosis,” *Ballettino dell’Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 78 (1967): 11. Making use mostly of the Latin sources, see Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 11-14. See also, N.S.M. Matheou, “Hegemony, Elitedom, and Ethnicity: ‘Armenians’ in Imperial Bari, c. 874-1071,” in *Italy and the East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean*, eds. T.J. MacMaster, N.S.M. Matheou (New York: Routledge, 2021), 245-272.

³⁰⁹ For a survey of some of the pertinent Greek and Latin texts, see von Falkenhausen, “Between two Empires: Byzantine Italy in the Reign of Basil II,” in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. P. Magdalino (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 137-139; S. Cosentino and E. Zanini, “Mapping the Memory of Byzantine Italy.”; Cosentino, *Storia dell’Italia bizantina*, 258-259 and 335-345.

³¹⁰ For this corpus, see M. Re, “Italo-Greek Hagiography,” in *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 227-258; “Telling the Sanctity in Byzantine Italy,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 609-640. D. da Costa-Louillet, “Saints de Sicile et d’Italie méridionale aux VIIIe, IXe et Xe siècles,” *Byzantion* 29/30 (1959-1960): 89-173.

³¹¹ On how the terminology of Romanness could be complicated in a southern Italian context, see discussion in Peters-Custot, “Between Rome and Constantinople”; and “L’identité des Grecs de l’Italie méridionale byzantine.”

among the scholarship of southern Italy.³¹² Again, the minimalization of the ethnic aspect of being Roman does not fully captured how the peoples of this region represented themselves or how that identity was understood by others. Thus, for reasons particular to the study of southern Italy, and to the study of Romanness more generally, modern scholarship has most often found Greeks, Byzantines, and even Italo-Greeks and Italo-Byzantines, but seldom has it encountered Romans.

There is certainly good reason to expect to find Romans in southern Italy by the reign of Basileios in the ninth century. The region had long housed Roman citizens, especially after the enfranchisement of most of the peninsula following the Social War.³¹³ Parts of this region had been under Roman control since the time of the Republic, with the exception of the rule of Odoacer and the period of Gothic rule (roughly 475-553).³¹⁴ Even then, there were many ways in which Romanness continued to be expressed under Gothic rule. Coins produced in Gothic Italy represented their rulers in the manner of previous Roman emperors. The *Excerpta Valesiana*, likely written in sixth century Ravenna, related that Theodoric ruled well the two *gentes* of the

³¹² Peters-Custot has published many important articles on the identity and literature of the Greek-speaking population of southern Italy, but Romanness is explicitly viewed as a political identity, which is applied to a multi-ethnic group of subjects. See again Peters-Custot “Between Rome and Constantinople,” 231-232; “Le barbare et l’étranger dans l’Italie méridionale prénormande (IXe–Xe siècles),” 147; and “Gli Italo-Greci e la duplicità degli imperi e della romanitas,” *Southern Italy as Contact Area and Border Region during the Early Middle Ages: Religious-Cultural Heterogeneity and Competing Powers in Local, Transregional and Universal Dimensions*, eds. K. Wolf and K. Herbers (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2018), 233. See also the distinction between “Byzantines” and “Greeks” in Cosentino, *Storia dell’Italia bizantina*, 270-273.

³¹³ M.P. Lavan, “The Foundation of Empire? The Spread of Roman Citizenship from the Fourth Century BCE to the Third Century CE,” in *The Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship upon Greeks, Jews and Christians*, eds. K. Berthelot, J. Price (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 21-54. Lavan emphasizes that although citizenship was an aspect of one being accepted as a Roman, it was not sufficient in itself.

³¹⁴ Much has been written about how aspects of Ostrogothic state may have been framed and understood in terms of Romanness by contemporaries. For a survey of this scholarship and discussion of some of the relevant primary sources, see G. Heydemann, “The Ostrogothic Kingdom: Ideologies and Transitions,” in *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*, eds. J.J. Arnold, M.S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 17-46. The extent to which the labels “Goth” and “Roman” corresponded with distinct ethnic groups has also been the subject of much discussion. For an overview of this debate, see B. Swain, “Goths and Gothic Identity in the Ostrogothic Kingdom,” in *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*, eds. J.J. Arnold, M.S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 203-233. See also, G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35-62.

Romans and Goths, “so that even by the Romans he was called a Trajan or a Valentinian, whose times he took as a model.”³¹⁵ Many studies have traced the emergence of a Roman ethnic community throughout the Italian peninsula, evidenced in both the literary and cultural material.³¹⁶ Much of this scholarship has focused on southern Italy in particular.³¹⁷ This phenomenon has been called “Romanization” – the gradual and non-uniform process by which individuals actively chose to adopt characteristics associated with being Roman, including such markers as: habits and customs, consumption patterns, shared beliefs and traditions, and the collective ethnonym.³¹⁸ Many of those who came to perceive themselves as Romans did so alongside another ethnic identity, several of which remained observable well into the imperial period.³¹⁹ Later Roman authors recalled the existence of a Roman population inhabiting southern Italy, as will be discussed further below.

Scholars have demonstrated many of the ways in which the people of southern Italy were linked to the rest of Romanía throughout its history under Roman rule, suggesting that a sense of

³¹⁵ *Excerpta Valesiana* 60. The text, paired with a biography of Constantine, appears to be engaging in the reputation of Theoderic as defined by Gothic propaganda, before later undermining his image as an appropriately Roman ruler. S.J.B. Barnish, “The ‘Anonymus Valesianus’ II as a Source for the Last Years of Theoderic,” *Latomus* 42.3. (1983): 572-596.

³¹⁶ See, for example, G.J. Bradley, “Romanization: the End of the Peoples of Italy?” in *Ancient Italy: Regions without Boundaries*, eds. G.J. Bradley, E. Isayev, and C. Riva (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 295-322; G.D. Farney, “Romans and Italians,” in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. J. McNerney (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 437-454; H. Mouritsen, *Italian Unification: A Study in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1998); T. D. Stek, “Material Culture, Italic Identities and the Romanization of Italy,” in *Blackwell Companion to the Archaeology of the Roman Republican Period*, ed. J. DeRose Evans (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 337-353.

³¹⁷ D.G. Yntema, “The Birth of a Roman Southern Italy: a Case Study,” *BABesch* 81 (2006): 91-133; “Material Culture and Plural Identity in Early-Roman Southern Italy,” in *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition*, eds. T. Derks and N. Roymans (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 145-166; K. Lomas, *Rome and the Western Greeks, 350 BC – AD 200: Conquest and Acculturation in Southern Italy* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³¹⁸ The term “Romanization” in respect to the Italian peninsula has its own complicated history, including a more teleological understanding of this concept employed by nationalist historians of the 19th and 20th centuries, who tended to exaggerate the homogeneity of Italy. Modern scholarship has rejected this notion. On this historiography, see N. Terrenato, “The Romanization of Italy: Global Acculturation or Cultural Bricolage?”; Mouritsen, *Italian Unification*, 23-39.

³¹⁹ See again, Bradley, “Romanization”; Farney, “Romans and Italians”; Stek, Material Culture, “Italic Identities and the Romanization of Italy”; and Yntema, “Material Culture and Plural Identity in Early-Roman Southern Italy.”

belonging to the larger Roman community was reinforced and encouraged. Michael McCormick, though the argument is framed in terms of Byzantine and Italo-Byzantine identity, has proposed three ways in which this connection manifested: personal identity, kinetic integration, and static integration.³²⁰ That is, some of the inhabitants of southern Italy, who are perhaps more appropriately referred to as “Italo-Romans,” maintained a common identity with other Romans through outward signs of identity (such as clothing, personal names, and language), movement to and from southern Italy and other parts of Romanía, and through ceremonial expressions (such as public prayers for the emperor and the use of regnal years on documents). Vera von Falkenhausen has likewise documented many of these same ties that bound the Italian themes of Langobardia and particularly Calabria to the rest of Romanía.³²¹ These connections included shared institutions of the state, travel between the peninsula and Constantinople, and the emigration and resettlement of Romans in this region. The large movements of Greek-speaking Christians, especially from the Peloponnese and Sicily, has been frequently noted and the nature of its effect on the peninsula has been the subject of much discussion.³²² This phenomenon has traditionally been explored in terms of “Byzantinization” and Hellenization, not just of language but variably in terms of cultural, religious, and ethnic identity.

³²⁰ McCormick, “The Imperial Edge.” On the relationship between clothing and Romanness, see Kaldellis, “Ethnicity and Clothing in Byzantium,” in *Identity and the Other in Byzantium*, eds. K. Durak and I. Jevtić (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2019): 41-52.

³²¹ von Falkenhausen, “The Tyranny of Distance.”

³²² Herrin, “Aspects of the Process of Hellenization in the Early Middle Ages,” *Margins and Metropolis: Authority across the Byzantine Empire*, 33-57; Gay, J. *L'Italie méridionale et l'empire byzantine: depuis l'avènement de Basile Ier jusqu'à la prise de Bari par les Normands 867-1071* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1904), 181-183; White Jr. “The Byzantinization of Sicily,” 1-21; Charanis, “The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlements in Greece,” 144-148; “On the Question of the Hellenization of Sicily and Southern Italy During the Middle Ages,” 74-86; See also G. Di Gangi and C.M. Lebole, “La Calabria Bizantina (VI-XIV secolo): Un evento di lunga durata,” in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine*, eds. A. Jacob, J.M. Martin and G. Noyé (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006), 471-487. The language of Sicily appears to have been predominately Greek at the time of the Muslim conquest, though Latin persisted in some parts of Sicily. K. Korhonen, “Greek and Latin in the Urban and Rural Epigraphy of Byzantine Sicily,” *Acta Byzantina Fennica* 3 (2009-2010): 116-135.

Others have demonstrated further connections that joined the themes of southern Italy to the rest of Romanía. Parts of this population shared in the traditions, culture, religion, and language that were often associated with being Roman and that could be referenced by contemporaries to distinguish Romans from non-Romans in the context of southern Italy.³²³ For example, in the tenth century, the apparently “foreign” clothing of Neilos, brought about confused reactions from the presumably Roman inhabitants of Rossano.³²⁴ Likewise, the Lombard duke Arichis II agreed to shave and to dress in the manner of the “Greeks” (tam in tonsure quam in vestibus usu Grecorum).³²⁵ Whether or not these descriptions were accurate representations of individual identity, they show the belief that it was possible to distinguish between Romans and non-Romans. There is even evidence for consumption patterns as potential ethnic identifiers.³²⁶ André Guillou has published many studies on the extent to which southern Italy was connected to the rest of Romanía, although he does so through the lens of Greek culture and Byzantine political identity.³²⁷ In one study, he concluded that the Greek-speaking

³²³ Many of these shared aspects are represented in the *Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021). On monumental architecture, see I. Baldini, “Conceiving Social Space in Byzantine Italy: Monumental Architecture and Building Typologies,” 695-725. On religious practices, F. D’Aiuto, “Devotion and Prayer in Byzantine Italy,” 641-668. On art, M. Bernabò, “Medieval Art in Italy and Byzantium (ca. 550–1050): A Viaticum,” 669-694, esp. 685-690; On the monetary system, Prigent, “Mints, Coin Production, and Circulation,” 329-359; On the law, C. Rognoni, “Legal Texts and Juridical Practice in Byzantine Italy,” 760-796. On language, von Falkenhausen, “Greek and Latin in Byzantine Italy (6th–11th Century),” 541-581 and P. Degni, “Literary and Book Production in Byzantine Italy,” 733-759. See also Peters-Custot on southern Italian onomastics, “L’anthroponymie italo-grecque: Calabre, Basilicate méridionale et Tarente (975-1200),” in *L’héritage byzantin en Italie*. (École française de Rome, 2009): 187-206.

³²⁴ *Life of Saint Neilos of Rossano*, 41.2.

³²⁵ This note is preserved in a letter to Charlamagne from Pope Hadrian. See, *Codex Epistolaris Carolinus*, 8.83.

³²⁶ G. Rolandsen, P. Arthur, A. Arthur, and M. Marie, “A Tale of Two Villages: Isotopic Insight into Diet, Economy, Cultural Diversity, and Agrarian Communities in Medieval (11th – 15th century AD) Apulia, Southern Italy,” *Journal of Archaeological Science Reports* 28 (2019). See also, P. Arthur, “Frontiers, identities and material culture in southern Italy,” in *Longobardi. Un passato declinato al future*, eds. P. Giulierini, F. Marazzi, M. Valenti (Modugno, Italy: Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli and Volturnia Edizioni, 2019), 173-178; E. Zanini, “Non-Agricultural Items: Local Production, Importation and Redistribution,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 300-327.

³²⁷ For example, see Guillou, “Notes sur la société dans le Katépanat d’Italie au X^e siècle,” *Mélanges Archéologie et Histoire* 78 (1966): 439-465; “Italie méridionale byzantine ou Byzantins en Italie méridionale.” See again Guillou, “Italie méridionale byzantine ou Byzantins en Italie méridionale.”; and “Grecs d’Italie du Sud et de Sicile au Moyen Age.

populations of southern Italy were united with the Romans not only through servitude (δουλεία) to the emperor, but through something akin to a “family spirit (οικειώσις),” which he understood to be an attachment to other “Greeks” developed within the environment of Roman southern Italy and preserved for some time after the end of Roman rule.³²⁸ This all suggests that ethnic affiliation with a broader Roman community and distinction among the peoples of southern Italy could and did occur.

None of this discussion intends to give an impression of a homogenous southern Italy, which included a number of recognizable ethnic groups, as well as those whose identity might not be accurately captured by the categories imposed upon them by the ancient or modern writers.³²⁹ The limited source material and oftentimes inaccurate ethnic categorization made by those sources cautions against too trusting of a reading of recorded ethnonyms.³³⁰ There is the potential that some adopted the terminology of the Latin speakers and identified as a members of a “Greek” (*Grecus* or *Graikos*) community or that they did so in certain contexts.³³¹ Nor should it detract from the distinctiveness of the Italian Romanness as a provincial identity nested within a broader Roman one and the significance that individuals may have attributed to their local

³²⁸ Guillou, “E Italia bizantina douleia e oikeiosis.” Guillou refers to a “psicologia collettiva bizantina.” The Greek-speaking community remained a visible part of the southern Italian landscape centuries after direct Roman rule. On this community, see Peters-Custot, *Les Grecs de l'Italie méridionale post-byzantine: Une acculturation en douceur* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2009); “Greek Communities in Post-Byzantine Italy,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 225-251.

³²⁹ See for example those potentially deemed as *mixobarbaros* - though this precise term is not recorded in the southern Italian context. Peters-Custot, “Le barbare et l'étranger dans l'Italie méridionale pré-normande (IXe-Xe siècles),” 155-156.

³³⁰ In addition, see C. Heath, “Contested Identities in the Byzantine West, circa 540-895,” in *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium*, eds. M.E. Stewart, D.A. Parnell, and C. Whately (New York: Routledge, 2022), 198-214; and from the same volume, J. Western, “Overlapping Identities and Individual Agency in Byzantine Southern Italy,” 217-231.

³³¹ It has been suggested that the self-identification of a certain 7th century Neapolitan, Stephanos, as a “Grecus” in a donation to the church of Ravenna, may have been attempting to affiliate himself with the city’s Greek-speaking Romans. E. Schoolman, “Greeks and ‘Greek’ Writers in the Early Medieval Italian Papyri,” *Medieval Worlds* 9 (2019): 139-159.

identities.³³² Many of the same studies cited above recognized aspects of Roman southern Italy that are particular to this region of Romanía and the hagiographies especially demonstrated the pride that some felt in their provincial origins.³³³ Rather, the purpose is to suggest that, despite the evident and important regional character of Roman southern Italy, there are several reasons to expect that the Greek-speaking Orthodox population identified with the Roman *genos* and that their affiliation with this community was accepted by other Romans. It would therefore be more appropriate to begin with the premise that Romanness was a salient identity within southern Italy, thereby establishing a point of reference from which to study Romanness and to further nuance this view as appropriate.

The Historical Memory of Roman Italy

Roman authors certainly recognized that southern Italy had historically been under Roman rule and that it had been home to a Roman population in the centuries preceding the reign of Basileios. Prokopios, for example, refers to a “certain Roman” who was a “Calabrian by birth (γένος).”³³⁴ The designation of “Calabrian” appears to indicate this individual’s provincial origin, with Calabrian being one of the Italian groups in Prokopios’ text that he includes as Roman.³³⁵ This is perhaps best indicated in the account of the Roman siege of Gothic-held Naples. The

³³² On the relationship between provincial and ethnic Roman identities, see again Kaldellis, “Provincial Identities in Byzantium.” A potential example of these regional or provincial identities, see “Salentine” identity in L. Safran, *The Medieval Salento: Art and Identity in Southern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

³³³ See again, for example, the differences in religious practices between Constantinople and the Italian provinces as demonstrated in D’Aiuto, *Devotion and Prayer in Byzantine Italy*. Guillou finds that despite the differences between the society of the Catepanate of Italy and, for example, that of the theme of Hellas “Nous sommes bien en terre byzantine.” Guillou, “Notes sur la société dans le Katépanat d’Italie au XI^e siècle,” 463-465.

³³⁴ Prokopios, *Wars* 7.8.12.

³³⁵ On the various groups that made up the “Italians” in Prokopios, see P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 320. See also “the land of the Calabrians and the other peoples (τε Καλαβρῶν καὶ τῶν ταύτῃ ἐθνῶν)” among whom the Roman commander could discern the few barbarians (ὀλίγους κομιδῇ τοὺς ἐνταῦθα βαρβάρους ὄντας), 7.18.2.

Neapolitans explained to the commander Belisarios that “you are not acting justly, O general, in marching against men who are Romans and have done no wrong, who inhabit a small city and have a garrison of barbarian masters, so that it is not even in our power, if we desire to do so, to oppose them.”³³⁶ The general responded, in part, that the Neapolitans should welcome the besieging army, “which has come to secure your freedom and that of the other Italians.”³³⁷ When Belisarios failed to convince the Neapolitans to surrender, he prayed that “an ancient city, which for ages has been inhabited by Christian Romans, may not meet with such a fortune, especially at my hands as commander of Roman soldiers, not least because in my army are a multitude of barbarians.”³³⁸ Prokopios recognizes the inhabitants of Naples in the fifth century as Romans, regardless of their political relationship with the Roman state.³³⁹ The Neapolitans were considered to be Romans without qualification, while with the Roman army, comprised of those who were subject, were distinguished between its Roman and “barbarian” components.

The populations and territories of Italy were clearly viewed as part of a larger history of the Romans in the universal chronicles – though these usually focus on the city of Rome or the peninsula more generally.³⁴⁰ Zonaras, in the introduction of his twelfth century *Chronicle*, traces “whence and from what the people of the Romans had its beginning; by whom the region of Italy was previously inhabited (πόθεν τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἔθνος, κάκ τίνος ἔσχηκε τὴν ἀρχὴν, καὶ παρὰ τίνων ἢ τῆς Ἰταλίας χώρα πρώην κατέκιστο).”³⁴¹ Sometimes these Romans of the more distant

³³⁶ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.8.7. Prokopios himself is sent to Naples in 6.4.1.

³³⁷ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.8.12.

³³⁸ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.10.27.

³³⁹ Prokopios writes that “it was not fated that the Neapolitans become subjects (κατηκόους) of the emperor scot-free,” in *Wars* 5.9.30.

³⁴⁰ For example, the twelfth century work of Zonaras recognizes the developments of the Roman *ethnos* from its “ancient” beginnings in the city of Rome to its “modern” existence beginning with Constantine. N.S.M. Matheou, “City and Sovereignty in East Roman Thought, c.1000–1200: Ioannes Zonaras’ Historical Vision of the Roman State,” in *From Constantinople to the Frontier: The City and the Cities*, eds. N.S.M. Matheou, T. Kampianaki and L.M. Bondioli (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 41-63.

³⁴¹ See the proem of Zonaras’ *Chronicle*.

past were designated as “ancient” or “living in ancient times” in comparison with contemporary Romans.³⁴² For example, Skylitzes likens the Norman defeat of the Roman forces at Cannae in the eleventh century to the one that occurred in “the very place where in ancient times (κατὰ τοὺς πάλαι χρόνους) Hannibal cut down many myriads of Romans.”³⁴³ Here the author found the defeat of Romans in southern Italy in the 3rd century B.C.E. to be a reasonable way for his audience to understand the significance of contemporary events. Elsewhere, he includes the failings of Michael III in southern Italy during the ninth century among the injuries brought to the whole to the polity of the Romans (τῇ πολιτείᾳ Ῥωμαίων γενόμενος κακῶν).³⁴⁴ The utilization of the historical materials gathered for the *Excerpta Constantiniana* of Konstantinos VII indicates an awareness of the region’s Roman past.³⁴⁵ The more distant history of the southern part of the peninsula and its place within the Roman state are subjects of two sections in the emperor’s *De thematibus* (on the themes of Sicily and Langobardia) and in a long section of *De administrando imperio* – both of which are discussed in detail further below. There was a clear remembrance in the minds of later Roman authors that the Italian peninsula, including the meridional parts, was a part of Romanía before the expeditions of Basileios in the ninth century.

However, the *De administrando imperio* and Zonaras also signal that there was an end of the Roman inhabitation of southern Italy. Even in the sixth century *History* of Agathias there is uncertainty as to how the Italian populations fit into a larger community of Romans.³⁴⁶ Several of the sources explored below credit Lombard and Muslim invasions of the peninsula for

³⁴² See, for example, the “ancient Romans (οἱ παλαιοὶ Ῥωμαῖοι)” in the *Taktika* 4.25; and the rather strange example of recently converted “Hellenes” who are of the *genos* of the “ancient Romans” mentioned in *De Administrando Imperio* 50.

³⁴³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 426.

³⁴⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 47-48.

³⁴⁵ On this project and its use of materials, see A. Németh, *The Excerpta Constantiniana and the Byzantine Appropriation of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³⁴⁶ D. DeForest, “Agathias on Italy, Italians and the Gothic War,” *Estudios bizantinos* 8 (2020): 61-81.

depopulating the cities of their Roman inhabitants or separating them from Roman rule – sometimes irreversibly.³⁴⁷ Thus, while the Roman past of southern Italy is well established in the sources, the Roman present (that is, at about the time of the reign of Basileios) appeared more complicated. Roman sources were confronted with a Southern Italy that was occupied by non-Roman peoples and states, and they perhaps re-conceptualized how they fit within the Roman world.

Lombards and Roman Italy in the *Taktika* of Leon VI

There are several, imperially produced texts that reflect upon the changes experienced in southern Italy and taken together, they provide a model for how this region and its inhabitants fit within Romanía. These texts do not necessarily provide an accurate depiction of ethnic identity “on the ground” or notice its potential complexity and fluidity, but they do provide insight into a Constantinopolitan courtly attitude towards the inhabitants of Roman southern Italy. The *Taktika* of Leon VI and other imperial manuals, such as the *De administrando imperio* and *De thematibus*, depict a southern Italy that was composed of two groups of subjects: Roman and non-Roman, distinct from one another despite their shared political status as imperial subjects. Each group required its own specific relationship with Constantinople based upon the supposed characteristics and historical experiences of those two populations. This set of texts identifies what peoples lived in southern Italy, what relationships the Romans had historically maintained with these peoples, and how they ought to consider this knowledge to best accomplish the administrative goals of the state.³⁴⁸ In short, a comprehensive analysis of these manuals

³⁴⁷ See also the *Life of Basileios* 52-53; Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicle* 133.11; Theophanes Continuatus 84; Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 47-48 and 145; Theophanes Continuatus 453-454.

³⁴⁸ Namely, the maintenance of peace and enforcement of taxation. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society*.

demonstrates to their readers how southern Italy fit into the Roman world as conceptualized by those at the center of it.

The *Taktika*, a military manual produced by the emperor Leon VI (886-912), purports to teach its reader how to best provide for the “peace and prosperity” of Roman subjects, through the provision of advice on various aspects of warfare.³⁴⁹ The text borrows much of its advice from previous military manuals, especially the *Strategikon* of the emperor Maurikios, parts of which the *Taktika* updates to serve its present context when deemed appropriate.³⁵⁰ Thus, one can observe changes in the information gathered for the *Taktika* that are supposed to reflect the different circumstances of the contemporary Roman world. The region of southern Italy is important to this military manual, as it provides a rough ethnographic map of the inhabitants of the southern part of the Italian peninsula, describing to the audience whom the Romans might contend with and ruler over in this region.

The *Taktika* distinguishes between the Roman and non-Roman inhabitants of southern Italy, based upon many of the elements that constitute ethnicity, and offers specific advice based upon this knowledge. It is important to note the distinction made by this text in response to the argument that Romanness is primarily a political identity that would include all of those who lived within the confines of Romanía. This would suggest that one’s servitude to the emperor was viewed as the foundational connection with the broader Roman world, overshadowing both local and imperial attitudes toward ethnic affiliation in southern Italy. Instead, peoples such as the Lombards, even those who were subject to the emperor, were identified as a non-Roman

³⁴⁹ This text was produced in the early tenth century. On this text and its purpose, see Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014), 9-119. “Peace and prosperity” are among the motivations expressed in the prologue of the *Taktika*.

³⁵⁰ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI*, 40-55; Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 87.

people with a set of supposed characteristics that contrasted with those of the Romans and that must be recognized by a user of the text for the benefit of the whole Roman state.

The text, at times, expresses the distinctiveness of the Lombards through certain vocabulary of classification – though this in itself is not necessary to indicate an ethnic group. The *Taktika* includes this group more generally among the *ethne* and specifically as the *ethnos* of the Lombards (Λαγοβάρδων ἔθνος).³⁵¹ The Lombards divided their military formations by “clans, their kinship with one another, or some common bond (φυλὰς καὶ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους συγγενείᾳ τε καὶ προσπαθείᾳ) or leagued together by oath,” perhaps making use of a more specific terminology of classification, but certainly indicating relationships specific to this people.³⁵² What is more indicative here, is that the manner in which the Lombards traditionally divided their forces contrasts with the kind of arrangement “as do the Romans (καθάπερ Ῥωμαῖοι).” This places the supposed Lombard custom against a Roman standard.

Even more than this kind of vocabulary, the text relates some of the customs and traditions that the Romans believed were practiced by the Lombards and made them an *ethnos*. Again, Leon borrows much of this information from the *Strategikon* of Maurikios, but updates some of the information.³⁵³ He notes that the Lombards “had formerly been bound by impiety, but have now embraced the true faith of the Christians.”³⁵⁴ Likewise, the Lombards have their own customs – mostly of a martial nature in this text - such as their “distinctive military practices, some of which are traditional (ιδιώματα).”³⁵⁵ The text encourages the lesson that that

³⁵¹ *Taktika of Leon VI* 15.32 and 18.74. The *Taktika* is not, of course, the only text to refer to a Langobard *ethnos*. See the following for a few examples: the Langobard φύλον in the seventh century *History* of Theophylaktos 2.17.9; the Lombards and other nearby peoples in the sixth century *History* of Agathias 1.4.2; and the Langobard princes of Capua and Salerno included in a list of addresses to ἐθνικοῦς in the tenth century *Book of Ceremonies* 2.48.

³⁵² *Taktika of Leon VI*, 18.79. The *Taktika* nearly preserves the exact wording of the *Strategikon* of Maurikios 11.3.

³⁵³ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI*, 347-350.

³⁵⁴ *Taktika of Leon VI* 18.74

³⁵⁵ *Taktika of Leon VI* 18.74

these traditions contrast with the manner of warfare that the Romans were accustomed and that one should be aware of and perhaps imitate these customs when appropriate. Finally, the *Taktika* lists the many stereotypes of the Lombards people, which included: placing “great value on freedom,” being “disobedient to their leaders,” being “impetuous” in their battles, and being “easily corrupted by money, greedy as they are.”³⁵⁶ The selection of many of these characteristics is a result of the genre in which this text is engaged. But it clearly expresses that the Lombards constitute a distinct group with its own specific characteristics and that it is important for the reader to properly take account of those differences. The Romans formed the explicit standard upon which Lombards customs were interpreted.

The distinctions between the Lombards and the Romans were still maintained even for those Lombards who were also subject to the Roman state. Despite the acknowledgement of Roman suzerainty over the Lombards, both those under the control of the Romans or allied to them, it was important for the text to present knowledge of the Lombards as an individual people. The *Taktika* singles out the Lombards among the subjects of the Romans in order to provide practical advice on proper rulership. It uses the conquest of the Lombards by Nikephoros Phokas the Elder as a paradigm for the effective integration of non-Romans. The text notes that “seeing that Our Majesty cherishes fairness and goodness and peacefulness toward our subjects (τοὺς ὑπηκόους), whenever, by your action, a city or fortress or nation (ἔθνος) should wish to come over to us, you must look to our mercy and kindness and receive and observe our gentle and salutary commands for them.”³⁵⁷ This statement responds to the concern that “a ferocious and harsh manner leads those who have been subjected (ὑποτασσομένους) to change their minds and

³⁵⁶ For the entire list of stereotypes, see *Taktika of Leon VI* 18.74-92. Many of these are lifted directly from the *Strategikon*, some with slight changes. See again Maurikios, *Strategikon* 11.3.

³⁵⁷ *Taktika of Leon VI*, 15.35. Parts of this section are loosely based upon Maurikios, *Strategikon*, 10.1.

causes those who have not yet been subjected to resist (τοὺς μήπω ὑποταγέντας ἀναστέλλει).”³⁵⁸

The *Taktika* distinguishes between the Roman state’s various subjects, recognizing that some needed accommodations particular to their specific *ethnos*.

The *Taktika* has little to say about those southern Italian subjects who might be considered ethnically Roman, but it provides one note in which shared Romanness was implicitly expressed. In the list of martial stereotypes that it borrows from the *Strategikon*, the text further explains the alleged greed of the Lombards. Leon confirms the existence of this vice from the knowledge that “those who have frequently come here from Italy on some business or other that by intermingling with them (ὥς τῇ ἐκείνων ἐπιμιξία), I think, even these have adopted their habits and become barbarized (καὶ τούτων βαρβαρωθέντων τε καὶ συνεθισθέντων).”³⁵⁹ Leon appears to interpret these individuals as the Roman inhabitants of Italy, whom he perceives to have transgressed the traditional *mores* of the Romans (as understood by Leon) by adopting non-Roman ones.³⁶⁰ That they were distinct from the Lombards and had become, or were becoming, “barbarians” suggests that the author had the Roman inhabitants of southern Italy in mind. This sentiment is quite similar to a passage in the chronicle of Skylitzes concerning the same period, in which he notes that emperor Basileios re-settled some of the inhabitants of Pontos into a newly re-founded city called Kallipolis (modern Gallipoli).”³⁶¹ A later interpolation to this text, adds that “this explains why even today the inhabitants have the same customs, dress and political institutions as the Romans (ὅθεν καὶ Ῥωμαῖκοις ἔθεσι καὶ στολαῖς καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ πάσῃ

³⁵⁸ *Taktika of Leon VI*, 15.34.

³⁵⁹ *Taktika of Leon VI*, 18.84.

³⁶⁰ Shepard, “Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” 93-94.

³⁶¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 151.

πολιτικῇ καταστάσει ἄγονται ἄχρι τῆς σήμερον).”³⁶² It is not clear whether the twelfth century editor still believed that the inhabitants of Gallipoli were Romans.³⁶³ However, when this editor looked back on ninth century Gallipoli, he expected that a population coming from Pontos to southern Italy would have been a Roman one, which would have shared many of the characteristics associated with the Roman ethnic community and would have been distinct in the southern Italian landscape.³⁶⁴ Neither Skylitzes nor the *Taktika* refer directly to the Romans of southern Italy by ethnonym but, as has been expressed above, this was not a requirement for the sources to indicate an ethnic group. Some Italians were associated with attributes of the Roman identity, distinguished from the Lombards, and were referred to by no other name.

The importance that the *Taktika* places on being knowledgeable about the various peoples who were subject to the Romans manifests in the differing administrative arrangements of the Italian provinces. Calabria was governed similarly to other Roman themes, while the governance of Langobardia, in contrast, reflected the more “imperial” nature of Roman rule in that province.³⁶⁵ That is, it was recognized that much of Langobardia was inhabited by subjects who were primarily non-Roman and therefore specific accommodations were necessary to encourage the acceptance of Roman authority. Evidence for the particularity of Roman rule in Langobardia

³⁶² Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 151. The final part of this clause has been translated somewhat differently. It a “thoroughly Roman social order,” in Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 40; and “public life” in Shepard, “Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13 (1988): 67-118. It is also mentioned in the *Life of Basileios* that the emperor settled 3000 freed slaves in Langobardia, from the household of a Peloponnesian woman named Danielis, 77.

³⁶³ Though the passage is attributed to Skylitzes and not a later editor, see Peters-Custot, “*Convivencia* between Christians: the Greek and Latin Communities of Byzantine South Italy (9th–11th centuries),” in *Negotiating Co-Existence: Communities, Cultures and Convivencia*, eds. B. Crostini and S. La Porta (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2013), 203-220; as does Shepard, “Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” 93-94.

³⁶⁴ Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 40.

³⁶⁵ Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 222.

is found in the continued prominence of *gastalds* who remained active in local administration.³⁶⁶ Such service was often accompanied by Roman honors and titles.³⁶⁷ The employment of Lombards in higher administrative positions is also recorded. The name of the early tenth century *strategos*, Ursoleon, suggests a Lombard background – though it is not necessarily indicative of his own expressed identity.³⁶⁸ The position of *strategos* was nearly occupied by Landulf, the independent ruler of Benevento-Capua, who negotiated with the Roman state over authority in Langobardia and had the support of many within the province.³⁶⁹ Landulf, who apparently considered himself the avenger of unstated crimes against the subjects of Roman Langobardia, previously had killed Ursoleon and defeated a Roman army. Although negotiations ultimately broke down, the Roman state was amenable to the idea of placing a Lombard ruler over the province to maintain peace in the region. Lombard law remained in effect within the province, existing alongside Roman law, as did traditional tax collection.³⁷⁰ Likewise, the practice of the Latin rite was (mostly) respected within the theme.³⁷¹ All of this suggests that the different

³⁶⁶ It has been suggested that some of this administrative apparatus should also be attributed to the relative weakness of the Roman presence in Italy. For an overview of the administration of the Langobardic theme and the relevant bibliography, see Prigent, “Byzantine Administration and the Army,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 156-159.

³⁶⁷ G. Zornetta, “Tradizione, Competizione, Emulazione. L’Italia meridionale longobarda alla periferia di due imperi (VIII–IX secolo),” in *Southern Italy as a Contact Area and Border Region during the Early Middle Ages*, eds. K. Wolf and K. Herbers (Vienna: Bohlau Verlag, 2018), 315-340.

³⁶⁸ von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell’Italia meridionale dal IX - XI secolo*, 60.

³⁶⁹ Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letters*, 82. This letter and others show the attempts to entice Landulf to exist within a structure suitable to the imperial court. See also letters 83-85 and perhaps 101 and 101a. See also Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies* 2.44.

³⁷⁰ Martin, *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle*, 709-715; *Byzance et l’Italie Méridionale* (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2014), 393-413; Rognoni, “Legal Texts and Juridicial Practice in Byzantine Italy.” This continued for some time, see von Falkenhausen, “A Dance to the Music of Time: Greeks and Latins in Medieval Taranto,” in *Italy and the East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean: Empire, Cities and Elites 476-1204*, eds. T.J. MacMaster and N.S.M. Matheou (New York: Routledge, 2021), 324-352.

³⁷¹ Peters-Custot, “Convivencia between Christians.” The *Chronicle* of Ahimaaz ben Paltiel states that Basil persecuted the province’s Jewish population, 5b and 7c. Liudprand of Cremona relates that Nikephoros Phokas attempted to remove the Latin rite from Roman southern Italy, though this claim seems unlikely. Liudprand of Cremona, *Relatio*, 62; H. Mayr-Harting, “Liudprand of Cremona’s Account of His Legation to Constantinople (968) and Ottonian Imperial Strategy,” *EHR* 116.467 (2001): 539–556, esp. 550-551; Loud, “Southern Italy in the 10th Century,” 630-633; J. Morton, *Byzantine Religious Law in Medieval Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 32-36.

organization of the Calabrian and Langobardic themes was due to imperial recognition and accommodation of the various ethnic groups present in those provinces.

The distinctions that the *Taktika* made between its subjects serves not only the practical goals of the text, but also its ideological ones. As mentioned above, Leon describes the lessons presented in the text as necessary for the benefit of the entire Roman state. There is an aspect of this project that emphasizes the restoration of Roman strength encouraged by the efforts of the emperor.³⁷² The proem explains that the Romans had lacked in martial prowess and that this had “cast all of the affairs of the Romans down to such a degree as we experience this very moment.”³⁷³ It was through that prior military knowledge that “the commonwealth of the Romans flourished of old,” but now with its absence “the accustomed triumph of the Roman commonwealth has flown away.”³⁷⁴ The text calls for the knowledge of the “ancient authorities” to be “brought back to life, remembered, and again restored to their ancient position.”³⁷⁵ The suggestion was that the renewed implantation of military knowledge had returned the state to its ancient strength, having been brought out of a period of decline by the emperor Leon.

The section on the Lombards in southern Italy provides evidence for the restoration that the effective use of that *Taktika* could bring. The Lombards, who long threatened the Roman holdings there, were now included among the friends and subjects of the Romans so that it was no longer even necessary to strategize militarily against them since they are “at peace and are allies, coreligionists, and subjects.”³⁷⁶ The *Taktika* even adds, in an update of the language of the *Strategikon*, that though the Lombards traditionally held a great value on freedom, they “have

³⁷² Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI*, 19-25.

³⁷³ *Taktika of Leon VI*, proem 3.

³⁷⁴ *Taktika of Leon VI*, proem 5.

³⁷⁵ *Taktika of Leon VI*, proem 6.

³⁷⁶ *Taktika of Leon VI*, 18.74.

now lost most of such virtue,” an apparent intimation that they had become firmly content with Roman rule.³⁷⁷ The text offers a highly favorable view of the situation in southern Italy, one that was out of keeping with the reality. Even with the Roman conquests in Langobardia under Basileios and Leon, the subjugation of the Lombards was not accomplished to the extent suggested in the *Taktika*. The Lombard principalities remained independent and in conflict with the Romans, Benevento was recovered only a few years after it fell into Roman hands, and there were rebellions in Calabria and Langobardia – especially at the beginning of the tenth century.³⁷⁸ Leon was certainly aware that the image presented in the *Taktika* did not reflect the reality, but the text establishes a powerful argument through these misrepresentations. In this specific example, the Roman emperor had restored the Roman people to a supposed ancient prosperity, in part, through the proper maintenance of imperial rule over non-Romans. This fusion of practical advice and ideological messaging is even more explicit in the imperial texts discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

A Short History of Roman Continuity in the *De Thematibus*

The *De thematibus*, a project undertaken by the emperor Konstantinos VIII, also includes ethnographic descriptions of the Roman provinces in addition to relating aspects of their

³⁷⁷ *Taktika of Leon VI*, 18.76.

³⁷⁸ Benevento was only held by the Romans from 891-895, see *Annales Lupi Protospatharii*, 44-45. In addition to the conflicts with Landulf described by Nikolaos Mystikos above, others mention the continued military activity in Langobardia after the initial interventions of Basil. See the *Revised Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete* from Vat. gr. 153 20-21; *Revised Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete* from Vat. gr. 167, 94; Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 156-157 and 262-266; *The Life of Elias Speliotes* 54; Loud, “Southern Italy in the 10th Century,” 627-629; Gay, *L'Italie méridionale et l'empire byzantine*, 202-217; M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 300-309. See also the situation in Calabria. G. Noyé, “Byzantine Calabria,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 434-452; “New Light on the Society of Byzantine Italy,” in *Social Change in Town and Country in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, ed. J. Howard-Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 157-195; “La Calabre entre Byzantins, Sarrasins et Normands,” in *Cavalieri alla conquista del Sud. Studi sull'Italia normanna in memoria di Léon-Robert Ménager*, eds. E. Cuozzo and J.M. Martin (Rome: Laterza, 1998), 90-116. A local rebellion is also recorded in the *Life of Saint Elias the Younger* 64.

individual histories.³⁷⁹ The themes of southern Italy are addressed in a chapter on Langobardia and in parts of a chapter on Sicily. This text, like the *Taktika*, claims to offer its reader a practical guide to the administration of the Roman state, and it makes use of more ancient material, which it could adjust to fit the contemporary context.³⁸⁰ And, again like the *Taktika*, it has been argued that the selection and reconfiguration of such evidence indicates an ideological purpose beyond the practical aims of the text. Namely, the *De thematibus* encourages a vision of Roman continuity and restoration of Roman order in the provinces. These themes are consistent with the larger ideological goals of the court of Konstantinos to promote itself as a revival of a more ancient Roman tradition. This has been seen variously as the emperor's response to distinguish his dynasty from that of the previous Amorian, the reign of his predecessor Romanos I, or even to western claims of Romanness.³⁸¹ Both the themes of restoration and continuity are evident in the portrayal of the Italian provinces. An analysis of this text reveals where the court at Constantinople identified continuity with the Roman past in southern Italy and where that continuity was disrupted and needed to be restored by members of the Macedonian dynasty.

The very beginning of the chapter on the theme of Langobardia indicates that a disruption had occurred in the Roman continuity of southern Italy. It starts with a brief description of the

³⁷⁹ J. Haldon, *The De Thematibus ('on the themes') of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 4-21.

³⁸⁰ Haldon, *The De Thematibus*, 21-26.

³⁸¹ Magdalino has argued that the *De administrando imperio*, and other projects sponsored by emperors Leon and Kostantinos, used the theme of restoration to a Roman past as a means to legitimize the members of their dynasty, especially in reaction to the reign of Romanos I. On this, see Magdalino, "Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire," especially 34-36; "Knowledge in Authority and Authorised History: The Imperial Intellectual Programme of Leo VI and Constantine VII," in *Authority in Byzantium*, ed. P. Armstrong (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 187-209. See also A. Markopoulos, "Voices from the Center: Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and the Macedonian Dynasty in Contemporary Historiography," in *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos: from de Ceremoniis to de Administrando Imperio*, eds. N. Gaul, V. Menze, and C. Bálint (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2018), 22-38; T. Lounghis, "L'historiographie de L'époque Macedonienne et la domination Byzantine sur les peuples du Sud-Est Européen d'après les traités de paix du 9e siècle," *Balkan Studies* 21 (1980): 69-86; and Stouraitis, "Scriptores post Theophanem: Normative Aspects of Imperial Historiography in Tenth-Century Byzantium," in *Historiography and Identity IV: Writing History across Medieval Eurasia*, eds. W. Pohl and D. Mahoney (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 219-246.

territories inhabited by the Lombards, which had formerly been the lands of Greek colonists in more ancient periods.³⁸² Even the name of this province, “Langobardia,” the etymology of which is recorded in this section, reflects the non-Roman origins of the theme.³⁸³ Unlike Sicily or Italy, for example, the names of which are the results of mythic etymologies, Langobardia received its name in much more recent history. This distinction signals a change in the history of the province from Roman to non-Roman. In doing so, the author indicates that this chapter is about the Roman administrative relationship with primarily non-Roman subjects, to the extent that it even looks beyond the initial provincial scope to include the independent Lombard states that stretched toward Campania.

The text attributes a break in Roman continuity as beginning during the reign of either Justinian or Zeno with the conquest of Naples and other cities of southern Italy by the Goths.³⁸⁴ Roman authority in the region was soon after reconstituted, but under an arrangement that was different than what had come before. The events of the chapter are quite abbreviated, but after the initial mention of the ancient Greek colonies, the story of southern Italy became as a Roman one. It was under Roman emperors that southern Italy was invaded by the Goths and under a Roman commander, Narses, that the province was brought back into order.³⁸⁵ For the latter event, the text includes an epigram preserved by the historian Agathias, which states that the Ausonians, a classicizing term for the Romans, defeated the Franks in a battle at the river Casulinus and henceforth they “had been subjected, along with the Lagobardoi among their ranks, and from then until today the region called Lagobardia is organized as a thema.”³⁸⁶

³⁸² Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus* 60. Agathias, *History* 2.10.8.

³⁸³ The name of Langobardia itself - both for the Roman theme and for the homeland of the Lombards more generally - distinguished it from the lands of the Romans. Von Falkenhausen, “The Tyranny of Distance,” 210. See also the same etymology in Genesios, *On the Reigns of Emperors* 4.32.

³⁸⁴ Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus* 60-61.

³⁸⁵ Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus* 61.

³⁸⁶ Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus* 61.

Though the theme had a Roman past, and after a short intermission it was returned to Roman control, the ethnic profile of the province as presented here is one that was dominated by the presence of non-Romans.

A second break in the continuity of Roman rule over Langobardia is recorded, again very succinctly, with the restoration of the province brought about by the Macedonian dynasty. The text relates that a certain Muslim emir named Sawdan (Soldanos in the Roman sources), along with a few others, besieged the Rhaousians, who called for aid from the newly made emperor Basileios. Sawdan and his fleet quickly abandoned the expedition out of fear from the arrival of Basileios and turned to southern Italy, where they “laid siege to the fortress of Bari, occupied it and seized all the fortresses and all of Lagobardia and the remaining forts of Kalabria as far as Rome, so that the total of the fortresses despoiled by them numbered 150.”³⁸⁷ Not long after, Basileios sent an army to Italy and “took all of Lagobardia just as today it is held and ruled by the Roman emperors.”³⁸⁸ This telling of events is clearly inaccurate. The emirate of Bari was established long before the reign of Basileios nor was it founded by Sawdan. This seemingly erroneous description purposefully fulfills the ideological goals of the text. The brevity of this account, which presents decades of history into mere sentences, condenses any intermission of Roman rule. Instead of admitting to the decades-long existence of a Muslim state in formerly Roman territory, it is made to seem only a momentary disruption set forever right by the powerful emperor Basileios. This claim about Langobardia likewise was oversimplified and not updated to meet the contemporary realities. The Romans certainly did not control the entirety of

³⁸⁷ Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, *De thematibus* 61-62. Compare this with a similar account in the *De administrando imperio* 29.

³⁸⁸ Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, *De thematibus* 62. The complete recovery of Italy is a component of several text produced under Konstantinos. See Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, *De administrando imperio* 29.213-216; Theophanes Continuatus 84; *The Life of Basileios* 55 and 65. Compare with Skylitzes, *Snyopsis of Histories* 150-151.

Langobardia, meaning the Roman province and independent Lombard states, but recording the story in such a way gave the appearance of a firm and continuous Roman rule. The text quickly resolves the periods of Gothic, Lombard, and Muslim rule by reducing them to moments that were surrounded on each side by Roman political continuity. At the same time, while Roman rule was preserved, there is the tacit acknowledgement that southern Italy was no longer an entirely Roman space, but rather a Lombard one that existed under the authority of the Romans.

There are also expressions of continuity in the section on the Calabrian province, included in the chapter on Sicily, but of a narrower scope and unaccompanied by the theme of restoration. This continuity was not only of Roman political rule over Calabria but also of Roman inhabitation of it. Following a description of the ancient Greek colonization of Sicily, the *De thematibus* turns to the Roman conquest of the island by the commander Marcellus and the early administrative arrangement of the province, which was first under the authority of Italian Rome until it was transferred to the Romans of Constantinople.³⁸⁹ Any potential disruption in Calabria from the Gothic and Lombard conquests is not mentioned in this chapter, and for Sicily the text only notes that the important cities of Syracuse and Taormina were conquered by the “Saracens” during the reigns of Basileios and Leon, respectively. The brevity in this claim, which was even more succinct than the conquests of Langobardia, is likely because it was under the Macedonian dynasty that these losses took place, and the compiler did not wish to bring additional attention to this.

For Sicily, the *De thematibus* could assert neither Roman continuity nor restoration, but it makes a more limited claim about the theme of Calabria. According to the text, “Such cities as are still left are in the hands of the godless Saracens, only Kalabria, which lies opposite is held

³⁸⁹ Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, *De thematibus* 59-60.

by the Christians, where is Rhegion and the little town of Hagia Kyriake, of Hagia Severine and Kroton and some others, governed by the *strategos* of Calabria.”³⁹⁰ It is probable that being Christian overlaps with being Roman here and the compiler switches to this aspect of one’s identity to meet the religious character of what had been up to this point a story of Romanness. The text refers to the “godless Saracens,” causing the momentary shift to a more religious register. Although Sicily had been lost to the Muslim conquests, Calabria remained Roman in both its administration and inhabitants. The text does not distinguish the Calabrians within the landscape of southern Italy in the same way that it does the Lombards; they do not receive their own *origo gentis*. Rather, they appear in the *De thematibus* to belong to the initial Roman foundation of this province.

The *De thematibus* shows uninterrupted Roman rule, even where there was not, and quick restoration where there were lapses. Though the descriptions are rather abbreviated, it accomplishes an image of political continuity by ignoring breaks in that continuity or by minimizing the duration of it. Moreover, it expresses two different kinds of continuity for Langobardia and Calabria. While the province of Langobardia adhered to an appropriate Roman order, the origins of that province were distinctly non-Roman. The history of a Roman province transformed into a Lombard one in harmony with Roman rule. In Calabria, no breaks in continuity are related nor was restoration required, since the Roman past of this province had been continuous.

Levels of Belonging in the *De Administrando Imperio*

³⁹⁰ Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, *De thematibus* 59-60. The text, making use of different source material for the geography of southern Italy than that used for the *De administrando imperio*, nevertheless notes that some of the cities of southern Calabria and Apulia have remained under the control of the Romans without the insinuation of autonomy or expressions of alterity. See Haldon, *The De thematibus*, 203 fn. 532.

The ideological argument for Roman political continuity in Calabria and Langobardia, is presented subtly and succinctly in the *De thematibus*, but the *De administrando imperio* expands upon this claim in much greater detail. This text is especially well suited to reveal how the Romanness of southern Italy was imagined by those at the center of Romanía in the wake of the conquests of Basileios. The project, the majority of which was completed between 949 and 952, was also devised under the supervision of the emperor, Konstantinos VII, and made use of material gathered during the reign of his father, Leon VI.³⁹¹ It has the nominal purpose of informing the reader:

“first, in what each nation (ἔθνος) has power to advantage the Romans, and in what to hurt, and how and by what other nation (ἔθνους) each may be encountered in arms and subdued... next, concerning also the difference between other nations (περὶ διαφορᾶς ἐτέρων ἐθνῶν), *their* origins and customs and way of life (γενεαλογίας τε <αὐτῶν> καὶ ἐθνῶν καὶ βίου διαγωγῆς), and the position and climate of the land in they dwell in, its geographical description and measurement, and moreover concerning events which have occurred at various times between the Romans and different nations (Ῥωμαίων καὶ διαφόρων ἐθνῶν); and thereafter, what reforms have been introduced from time to time in our state (ἐν τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς πολιτείᾳ), and also throughout the Roman empire (ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ).”³⁹²

Similar to the *De Thematibus*, this text includes a compilation of ethnological, geographic, and historical material intended for the practical application of its reader. This text, however, mostly looked beyond the Roman provinces. Though it does not always adhere to these exact

³⁹¹ On this text and its much-debated authorship and compilation, see J. Howard-Johnston, “The De Administrando Imperio: A Re-examination of the Text and a Re-evaluation of its Evidence about the Rus,” in *Les centres proto-urbains russes entre Scandinavie, Byzance et Orient*, eds. M. Kazanski, A. Nersessian, C. Zukerman (Paris: Éditions P. Lethielleux, 2000), 301-336; P. Komatina, “Constantine Porphyrogenitus, de Administrando Imperio and the Byzantine Historiography of the mid-10th century,” *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta* 56 (2019): 39–68. See also P. Schreiner, “Clothes Make the Man—Writings the Emperor Tracing Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and His Œuvre Through the Centuries,” in *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos From De Ceremoniis to De Administrando Imperio*, eds. N. Gaul, V. Menze, and C. Bálint (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 223-241.

³⁹² See the poem of the *De Administrando Imperio*. Feldman includes a very helpful collection of the terms used in the *De Administrando Imperio* that can be associated with the concept of ethnicity (such as ἔθνος, γένος, φύλον and their derivatives) and how these terms are translated by Jenkins. See A.M. Feldman, “Reconceptualizing Northern Peoples in the De Administrando Imperio,” *Πρακτικά 9ου Συνεδρίου Μεταπτυχιακών Φοιτητῶν και Υποψηφίων Διδακτόρων του τμήματος Φιλολογίας Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, 4-7 Οκτωβρίου 2017, Βυζαντινή Φιλολογία* (2018): 34-36.

parameters, the *De administrando imperio* attempts to offer the user a framework through which to understand the various peoples who surrounded the Romans and the character of the relationship that they had experienced with them.

The Italian peninsula is subject to one of these depictions and a relatively full picture of it emerges over the course of several chapters (26-28).³⁹³ Of the so-called “Italian dossier,” chapter 27 specifically focuses on providing an account of southern Italy, which it titles “the theme of Langobardia.” Much of the scholarly attention placed upon this set of Italian chapters has regarded the potential sources and historical accuracy of the information for this account.³⁹⁴ It has often been noted that there are glaring mistakes and omissions in this section. Most obviously, the text transfers the events of the Lombard conquest from the sixth century to the eighth century and it imagines a picture of the Roman administration of pre-Lombard Italy that is not representative of that system as it existed in reality. Some scholars have argued that such obvious errors, including those evident in the Italian chapters, were willful mischaracterizations included in the organization of the text.³⁹⁵ That is, errors that were previously attributed to editorial oversight or the absence of complete information, are better understood as the purposeful reinterpretation of the available historical material in order to conform to the ideological designs of the compilers. This even includes knowledge acquired from local sources,

³⁹³ Komatina, “Constantine Porphyrogenitus, de Adminstrando Imperio and the Byzantine Historiography of the mid-10th century, 45-46; P. Magdalino, “Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire,” in *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, ed. S. Bazzaz, Y. Batsaki, and D. Angelov (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 31-32.

³⁹⁴ F. Dvornik, R.J.H. Jenkins, B. Lewis, Gy. Moravcsik, D. Obolensky, and S. Runciman, *De administrando imperio: Commentary* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), 88-91.

³⁹⁵ Howard-Johnston, “The De Administrando Imperio.” For errors in the Italian dossier and a survey of the previous scholarship on them, see the article of Bondioli, which is discussed at length below. Bondioli, “From the Frontier Cities to the City and Back? Reinterpreting Southern Italy in the *De administrando imperio*,” in *From Constantinople to the Frontier: the City and the Cities*, eds. N.S.M. Matheou, T. Kampianaki, and L.M. Bondioli (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 365-384.

which could be repurposed to serve the goals of the text.³⁹⁶ Like the *De thematibus*, the *De administrando imperio* invites the reader to make sense of the contemporary Roman world through a framework that was more acceptable to the compilers. The text demonstrates Roman continuity in the provinces and restoration to a previous Roman order when that continuity appears lacking.³⁹⁷ It envisioned not only the relationships that other peoples and places currently had with the Romans, but an idealized image reflective of the relationships that they should have.

The image of southern Italy as presented in the *De administrando imperio* is similarly less interested in an accurate representation of the past, but rather it focuses on reconfiguring the past to provide a more favorable view of the present. Lorenzo Bondioli has shown that many of the supposed errors present in chapter 27 were deliberate reinterpretations of the historical record meant to emphasize the near continuity of Roman rule over southern Italy and the ancient Roman precedents of that rule.³⁹⁸ This argument can be developed even further. An analysis of this text and its historical errors and omissions provides insight into how those at the imperial court of Konstantinos understood the configuration of the peoples and places of southern Italy within the broader Roman world. It presents nearly the same argument as the *De thematibus*, though significantly more complex, in that it shows different levels of relationships between the communities of southern Italy and the Roman state, and it does so in much greater detail.

Chapter 27 begins with the presentation of a list of cities that were “in the possession of the Romans (κατεκρατεῖτο παρὰ τῶν Ρωμαίων)” in “ancient times (ἐν τοῖς παλαιοῖς χρόνοις)” –

³⁹⁶ For the potential local sources in the Italian dossier, see Dvornik et al., *De administrando imperio*, 89; Bondioli, “From the Frontier Cities to the City, and Back,” 371-375. On the appropriation of local traditions to suit a Roman purpose, see H. Gračanin and J. Škrkulja, “Refashioning of Historical Reality: Three Stories by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and the Early Medieval History of Croatia,” in *Samuel's State and Byzantium: History, Legend, Tradition, Heritage*, ed. M.B. Panov (Skopje, 2015), 24-34.

³⁹⁷ Gračanin and Škrkulja, “Refashioning of Historical Reality.”

³⁹⁸ Bondioli. “From the Frontier Cities to the City, and Back.” See also, von Falkenhausen, “Italy in Byzantine Literature of the Tenth Century,” in *Κωνσταντίνος Ζ΄ ὁ Πορφυρογέννητος καὶ ἡ ἐποχή του*, ed. A. Markopoulos (Athens, 1989), 25–38.

apparently in reference to the centuries before the arrival of the Lombards.³⁹⁹ These cities, which constituted part of the “whole domain of Italy (ἡ πᾶσα ἐξουσία),” included “both Naples and Capua and [Benevento], Salerno and Amalfi and Gaeta and all of [Langobardia].”⁴⁰⁰ The geography is somewhat inexact, perhaps purposefully, as the text refers to these places as the entirety of Italy whereas elsewhere Italy is shown to have a broader conception.⁴⁰¹ By “all of Langobardia” the text combines the Roman province with the areas under Lombard self-rule, a territory which stretched all the way to Rome.⁴⁰² The text explains, seemingly incorrectly, that these cities were initially administrated by the city of Rome, until the “seat of the empire was removed to Constantinople” after which the emperor divided the region into two, sending one a patrician to govern Sicily and Calabria and Naples and Amalfi, and another stationed at Benevento to govern Pavia and Capua and “all the rest.”⁴⁰³ The text then follows that “all these countries aforesaid used to be inhabited by Romans.”⁴⁰⁴ This indicates that the changes experienced in Italy, which the text attempts to provide a comprehensive image of, were not only a matter of rulership, but of what peoples inhabited the land. It provides an image of southern Italy that was not only controlled by Romans but lived in by them.

Already a few notes can be observed as to how the text purposefully reimagines the historical narrative by mapping the political geography of southern Italy onto an ancient Roman

³⁹⁹ *De administrando imperio* 27.3-6.

⁴⁰⁰ *De administrando imperio* 27.3-6. This same list of cities is repeated, without Salerno and “all of Langobardia” in *De administrando imperio* 27.50-52.

⁴⁰¹ The designation “Italy” has a number of meanings in the Roman sources, including: the entirety of the peninsula, the peninsula with the exception of Calabria, and the kingdom of Italy. See Von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI secolo*, 48. The *De Administrando Imperio* refers to the king of Italy in chapter 26 and 29 as having northern Italy within his domain. In the eleventh century, Michael Psellos writes in his *Chronographia* that “when I speak of Italy here, I am referring not to the whole coastline, but only to that part which lies opposite us and has appropriated the name of the whole peninsula,” 6.78.4-6.

⁴⁰² The sense that Langobardia extended all the way to Rome is often repeated. *De administrando imperio* 29.102-103; *De thematibus* 62.

⁴⁰³ *De administrando imperio* 27.5-12.

⁴⁰⁴ *De administrando imperio* 27.13-14.

past. The author was likely aware that Amalfi and Salerno were not ancient Roman cities, especially as the more recent foundation of Salerno is described later in the passage.⁴⁰⁵ The administrative divisions are also peculiar, though somewhat more accurate if the claim was not made that the arrangement was a Roman one. Sicily and Calabria had united under the theme of Sicily and were governed by a Constantinopolitan figure – though certainly not in ancient times.⁴⁰⁶ To an extent, the close relationship with Constantinople could apply to the cities of Naples and Amalfi, which, though effectively autonomous long before this point, nominally recognized imperial authority.⁴⁰⁷ The *strategos* of Sicily performed a symbolic confirmation of power over the duke of Naples in various periods and once was called to establish a duke in the city at the behest of the Neapolitans.⁴⁰⁸ Sicily, Calabria, Naples and Gaeta - even if some were only symbolically subject - appear to have been specifically grouped together according to the nature of their current relationship with the Romans. Likewise, the text connects the cities of Capua, Benevento, and Pavia together, although it places Benevento and its duchy as the center of authority instead of Pavia, which was formerly the center of the Lombard kingdom and the contemporary capital of the kingdom of Italy. The geography again is inexact, but the stated territory seems to stand in for the entirety of contemporary Langobardia. The first list of cities introduced in this chapter and the expressions of Roman authority over them indicated that all of the above territories were rightful parts of Roman southern Italy. Distinctions among these territories appeared to emerge in the subsequent and anachronistic administrative divisions, with

⁴⁰⁵ As noted by Bondioli, “From the Frontier Cities to the City, and Back,” 369. *De administrando imperio* 27.52-53.

⁴⁰⁶ Prigent and Nicheanian, “Les stratèges de Sicile.”

⁴⁰⁷ Arthur, *Naples from Roman Town to City-State: an Archaeological Perspective* (Rome: The British School at Rome, 2002), 16-20; Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta.”; D.M. Deliyannis, “Bishops, Cities, and Historical Memory in Byzantine Italy,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. S. Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 596-601.

⁴⁰⁸ *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum* 50.

Benevento, Capua, and Pavia on the one hand and Sicily, Calabria, Naples, and Amalfi on the other.

The *De administrando imperio* continues to develop these themes in the misplaced account of the Lombard conquest of Italy brought about by the invitation of the Roman commander Narses. After the description of the capture of Benevento, the text introduces yet another list of southern Italian cities and territories. In this case, it explains that the Lombards “subdued all that land (πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐκείνην ὑπέταξαν), both the province of [Langobardia] and Calabria and as far as [Pavia], except for Otranto and Gallipoli and Rossano and Naples and Gaeta and Sorrento and Amalfi.”⁴⁰⁹ This list of cities which remained unconquered is likewise composed of distinct groupings. There are the Campanian cities (Naples, Gaeta, Sorrento, and Amalfi), all of which are noted to be under the authority of the Romans in ancient times and two of which (Naples and Amalfi) were previously linked together with the Roman themes, in contrast to the contemporary Lombard territories administrated from Benevento. The other three unconquered cities (Otranto, Gallipoli, and Rossano) represent, though not exhaustively, the parts of the peninsula that remained under direct Roman control throughout the entire account of the history of southern Italy. After the Lombard conquest, the author explains that the southern Lombard duchies were partitioned between two brothers, one named Sicon, who “governed [Benevento] and the districts of Bari and Sipontum” and one named Sicardus, who governed Salerno and Capua and the district of Calabria.”⁴¹⁰ The result is a reasonable, though certainly imperfect, depiction of the extent of Lombard control over the southern part of the peninsula before the conquests of Basileios – a territory the stretched from the area south of Rome, to northern Calabria, and to most of what would become the Lombard theme in Apulia. The

⁴⁰⁹ *De administrando imperio* 27.46-50.

⁴¹⁰ *De administrando imperio* 27.52-58.

southern Italian section of chapter 27 concludes with the claim that “Naples and Amalfi and Sorrento have always been subject to the Romans (ὕπῃρχον ἀεὶ ὑπὸ τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων).⁴¹¹ Once again, the purposeful grouping of the various cities suggests that some value is to be derived from their particular placement. They are connected specifically according to their relationship with the Romans. In this case, there are those who have remained unconquered and in constant subjection to the Roman state and those whose territories were formed out of conquest against the Romans.

A selection from chapter 29, which primarily focused on the theme and peoples of Dalmatia, concludes the picture of southern Italy created by the *De administrando imperio*. This passage records the story of Sawdan and the Roman conquest of Bari along similar lines to the *De thematibus*. Sawdan, who had been conspicuously absent from the history of southern Italy up to this point, blockaded the city of Ragusa in Dalmatia.⁴¹² After he was driven away by the Roman fleet led by Niketas Ooryphas, he turned to Italy and successfully occupied the city of Bari, from where he “was for forty years master of all [Langobardia] as far as Rome (κατεκράτησεν τὴν πᾶσαν Λαγουβαρδίαν μέχρι Ῥώμης ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα).”⁴¹³ The emperor Basileios organized an expedition against the Muslims at Bari, requesting the assistance of the pope Hadrian II and the Carolingian emperor Louis II (855-875 as sole ruler). Much like in the *De thematibus*, this portrayal is incorrect and the timeline is greatly condensed.⁴¹⁴ As mentioned above, Sawdan was already the leader of an emirate based in Bari, which had existed well before the reign of Basileios, and other sources recorded that the alliance against the city was formed by

⁴¹¹ *De administrando imperio* 27.67-68.

⁴¹² For the entire account, see *De administrando imperio* 29.88-112. The text calls Soldan the leader of a group of “Saracens from Africa” and distinguishes two other individuals, who are referred to as Sava and Kalphos. A similar version of these events is preserved in *De thematibus* 61-62.

⁴¹³ *De administrando imperio* 29.102-103.

⁴¹⁴ For the historical errors and potential sources for this information, see Dvornik et al., *De administrando imperio: Commentary*, 101-106.

Louis. The Romans did not actually take part in the battle.⁴¹⁵ The events reimagined as such demonstrated the power of Roman influence in the region over the Muslims and at the expense of Louis, but this story also explains the cause of the current relationship experienced with the Lombard states. Sawdan, while a captive of Louis, was said to have encouraged a successful rebellion among the Lombards of Capua and Benevento by convincing them that Louis meant to banish them to Frankia.⁴¹⁶ Sawdan afterward returned to Africa, where he gathered a new force, and besieged for himself the cities of Benevento and Capua. Lombard representatives sought aid from Louis and, after being sternly rejected by him, they turned to the Romans. The affirmative response of Basileos to aid the Lombards apparently so frightened Sawdan that he turned to flight and “from that time until this day the men of Capua and the men of [Benevento] have been under the authority of the Romans in perfect servitude and subjection (ὑπὸ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῶν Ῥωμαίων εἰς τελείαν δούλωσιν καὶ ὑποταγὴν), for that great benefit which was done to them.”⁴¹⁷ The account concludes with an explanation of how the Lombards and their cities came into the Roman fold wherein they have perfectly remained, thereby becoming reengaged with the ancient administrative order of Roman southern Italy presented in chapter 27.

Thus, the *De administrando imperio*, through a series of intentional misrepresentations and omissions of the historical record, rewrites the story of southern Italy to emphasize the themes of Roman continuity in parts of the peninsula and the restoration of rightful Roman rule over those places which had previously lapsed beyond the direct control of the state. Other sections of the text, for example chapters 29-36 on Dalmatia and the surrounding peoples,

⁴¹⁵ The Roman fleet appeared outside of Bari, but after some unknown disagreement with Louis departed. Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 42-45.

⁴¹⁶ For the whole account, see *De administrando imperio* 29.113-216.

⁴¹⁷ *De administrando imperio* 29.213-216. It is similarly stated in *De thematibus* 62, that “ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς κατέσχε τὴν πᾶσαν Λογγιβαρδίαν, καθὼς καὶ σήμερον παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλέων δεσπόζεται.”

similarly reconfigured history to rationalize the current state of affairs, better adapting them to a more acceptable and uninterrupted Roman model.⁴¹⁸ The resulting picture of southern Italy appears to resolve the discord threatened by Narses before the Lombards invasion, that “I will twist you hanks with spindle and distaff such as the Romans shall never be able to unravel so long as they endure.”⁴¹⁹ In contrast, this text characterizes a ninth century Southern Italy in terms of harmony with an ancient Roman past accomplished by the efforts of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty.

The Romanness of southern Italy in the *De administrando imperio* is not entirely without qualification and different levels of belonging can be observed in the text. Among the functions of the text as concluded by Bondioli, was to show that, although all appear to rightfully belong to the Roman state, there are two distinct relationships expressed and reasons for them.⁴²⁰ There are on the one hand the Campanian cities and Sicilian theme, who were unconquered and always loyal to the Romans, and on the other hand the Lombards, who only more recently returned to their proper place within the Roman fold thanks to the protection provided by Basilios. The former relationship of “unconquered cities” can be refined further to separate the cities of Calabria and Apulia. These appear only briefly, first as lands part of the lands administrated from Constantinople and then among the territories preserved from the Lombards. These potentially refer to the parts of southern Italy that the author understood not only to have remained subject to the Romans but inhabited by them as well. These territories, covered briefly in the *De*

⁴¹⁸ See again, Gračanin, “Refashioning of Historical Reality.”; N. Budak, “Croatia and Byzantium in the Tenth Century: A Latin Member of the Byzantine Commonwealth,” in *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos: From De Ceremoniis to De Administrando Imperio*, ed. N. Gaul, V. Menze and C. Bálint (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 211-222; T. Živković, “On the Baptism of the Serbs and Croats in the Time of Basil I (867–886),” *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 1 (2013): 33–53; Komatina, “Constantine Porphyrogenitus, de Adminstrando Imperio and the Byzantine Historiography of the mid-10th century,” 46-48; Magdalino, “Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire,” 32.

⁴¹⁹ *De Administrando Imperio* 27.27-30.

⁴²⁰ Bondioli, “From the Frontier Cities to the City, and Back,” 383.

thematibus, did not receive prolonged discussion as they are not the subject matter of the *De administrando imperio*. That is, the text does not need to explain the Roman relationship with these people, because they were not an external *ethnos*, but an integral part of the Roman state.

A tripartite model is derived from this exercise, one that explains the current relationships that the various people of southern Italy have (or should have) with the Romans and that reveals to the reader the three distinct levels of belonging: the newly reincorporated non-Romans (the Lombards, both within and beyond the Roman theme of Langobardia), the perpetually subject and loyal non-Romans (the cities of Campania), and the Romans of southern Italy since “ancient times” (parts of southern Calabria and Apulia). The text admits that southern Italy had changed from the time when all this land was inhabited by Romans, but it constructs a new vision of Roman Italy, one that grafts onto an imagined past. It shows the Romans, led by the Macedonian dynasty of emperors, had restored a fragmented Italy to its rightful Roman order and, in the process of doing so, it demonstrates that the Romans conceived of several distinct relationships with the peoples of Italy. A story of lapsed Romanness was reworked into an example of continuity.

Conclusion

Taken together, these three texts depict a generally consistent and comprehensive view of how the imperial court at Constantinople understood the peoples of southern Italy and wished to portray its relationship with them. The literary projects of the Macedonian emperors depict a southern Italy defined by the theme of Roman continuity, but a continuity that was limited in scope and, in some instances, was restored by members of that dynasty. The desired image of complete and long-standing Roman authority clearly departs from the historical reality. During

the reigns of both Leon and Konstantinos, there was frequent conflict with the Lombards – both internal and external. Territorial borders frequently ebbed and, at times, Roman control became tenuous if not entirely absent. The same can be said of Calabria, which has been suggested to have been a province in name only during parts of the tenth century. Rebellions occurred here as well, some of which complicated the notion continuity of Romanness within the province. None of this complexity is reflected in imperial propaganda and this is not simply because of the context of the source material. These texts could and did update the more ancient material to suit present purposes. The image of Italy that these texts depict is the result of willful distortion.

A few conclusions can be drawn about the imperial view of meridional Italy as reflected in the propagandic output of the Macedonian dynasty. First, the Italian peninsula was clearly understood to be multi-ethnic space – one that included Romans – and each group was understood to have had its own independent history of entanglements with the Roman state. In recognition of these various pasts, the three manuals discussed in this chapter recommend cultivating a set of relationships specific to its non-Roman subjects and acting based on this knowledge. This varied attitude toward the people of southern Italy translated to differing administrative organizations and vocabulary of imperial authority. The state relied upon the imagery of “friends and allies” in its attempts to coerce Lombard participation in Roman rule. Real or imagined political control over southern Italy did not correspond with an all-encompassing Roman political identity that overshadowed ethnic distinctions. All of those whom the texts include were portrayed as subject to the Romans, but not all subjects were Roman.

This distinction is important for the ideological ambitions of the *Taktika* to show that renewal has been accomplished as demonstrated by the supposedly conscientious rule imposed upon the Lombards. In the *De thematibus* and *De administrando Imperio*, the lapse of

Romanness is something that must be carefully overcome so that continuity with the past can be achieved. Expressions of continuity with an ancient Roman past require these texts to overlook or ignore the complicated history of this region. They draw lines between Romans and non-Romans, where they might not so clearly have existed at the local level. They also disregard the political instability of Roman rule over its provinces and influence over the neighboring states in Campania and Langobardia. An ethnic Roman population was present in these texts, but its size had been much diminished from “ancient times” and the texts do not make the claim that this has been reversed. Instead, these two texts actively redefine what a Roman Italy might look like. The ancient story of Roman rule over ethnic Romans transforms to a new arrangement characterized by Roman rule over, or in alliance with, non-Romans, with only limited ethnic continuity expressed. What happened to those ethnic Romans is presented in broad strokes of abandonment and conquest. The collective response of these texts to the changing ethnic profile of the peninsula from some unspecific earlier date, shows them to be imperfect representations of the local reality of ethnic identity in both the historical and contemporary southern Italy. Only in the *Taktika* is there any indication of ethnic change based upon time spent in community with non-Romans or something that perhaps captures the complexity of ethnic expression. Through this new model of southern Italy, founded upon omissions and fabrications of the past, the Macedonian dynasty could show itself simultaneously as both the preservers and restorers of a prior Roman order, correcting the failings of previous emperors.

CHAPTER 4: Rome & Ravenna

Therefore, as we said, with Maurice and his sons dead, Phocas invaded the kingdom of the Romans, and held the principate for a period of eight years. At the request of blessed Pope Boniface, he decreed that the Roman church was the head and seat of all the churches, where before the church of Constantinople was called first. And again the said pope sought from him, that the old shrine which the Romans called the Pantheon, with the filth of the idols destroyed, might become a church of the holy and inviolate Virgin Mary and all of the saints of God, martyrs and confessors.⁴²¹

This passage from the ninth century *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, or the *LPR*, highlights some of the potential notions of Romanness that could exist for one reflecting upon the period of the so-called exarchate of Italy (584-781) – the name for the Roman administrative unit that governed lands in central and northern Italy. The passage itself, with a few alterations, is lifted from Paul the Deacon's eighth century *Historia Langobardorum* – a text with its own complex views on Roman identity.⁴²² The inclusion of this passage in the *LPR*, however, is important for understanding the notions of Romanness that circulated within the territories of the exarchate. The author, Agnellus, was a Latin-speaker, who was born in a post-exarchate Ravenna about fifty years after it was lost to the Roman state. Ravenna held an especially prominent position within the Roman state since the emperor Honorius placed his court there in the early fifth century. The city intermittently housed Roman emperors, before becoming the capital of the Gothic kingdom of Italy and then center of the exarchate. Ravenna was once a center of the Roman world, with inhabitants that considered themselves and were considered by others to be Romans. As the passage above demonstrates, however, it was possible by the ninth century for

⁴²¹ Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* 107. Hereafter referred to as the *LPR*.

⁴²² Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 4.36. M. Maskarinec, "Who were the Romans? Shifting Scripts of Romanness in Early Medieval Italy," in *Post-Roman Transitions. Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West*, eds. W. Pohl and G. Heydemann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); C. Heath, *The Narrative Worlds of Paul the Deacon: Between Empires and Identities in Lombard Italy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 39-66; W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History A.D. 550-800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 347-370.

there to be multiple ways in which the Roman people and Roman state might be represented in Ravenna.

Agnellus acknowledges that the Roman state was ruled by an emperor in Constantinople, and he names this state both the kingdom of the Romans (*Romanorum regnum*) and their principate (*principatum*). This phrasing is generally similar to how Agnellus refers to the states and rulers of other peoples, such as the “king of the Goths” or the “dukes of the Franks,” indicating that he understands this entity to be the possession of a distinct people.⁴²³ In the lines that follow, Agnellus describes how Herakleios acquired the Roman republic from the emperor Phokas (*rem Romanam publicam regendam suscepit*).⁴²⁴ In doing so, he presents this Roman state as an entity in continuity with the ancient Roman republic. Moreover, by referring to this state as the *Res Publica*, he unintentionally describes the accession of Herakleios to the head of this polity in a manner similar to how the Greek-language sources portray these events.⁴²⁵ Yet, only in these two borrowed passages does Agnellus refer to a Roman state in the east, an entity to which he otherwise denies the language of Romanness. This suggests that the account borrowed from Paul the Deacon is either a mere literary remnant or it indicates a change in Agnellus’ view of the Roman past.

Agnellus also acknowledges the Romans of the more distant past. In describing the Pantheon, he clarifies the account of Paul the Deacon to make explicit that it was the Romans, presumably the ancient ones, who had worshiped the gods in that space.⁴²⁶ In “ancient history”

⁴²³ See Agnellus’ mention of the leaders of these two groups in comparison to the non-descript acknowledgment of emperor Justinian and the general Narses in *LPR* 203.

⁴²⁴ Agnellus, *LPR* 225.

⁴²⁵ Both Theophanes and Nikephoros the Patriarch establish Heraklios as a protector of the Roman people whom the Romans elevated over their *politeia* in response to the crimes of Phokas. See Nikephoros, *Short History* 1; and Theophanes, *Chronicle* 290-299. See also Al-Tabari’s account, which likewise depicts events in this manner, in El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 39-40.

⁴²⁶ Paul the Deacon says the temple used to be called the Pantheon but does not specify by whom it received this name. *History of the Lombards* 36.

these Romans had a senate, which ultimately failed to protect the liberty and well-being of its citizens.⁴²⁷ Finally, in the passage above, Agnellus refers to those Romans who inhabit the city of Rome in contemporary times, here represented by their pope who has been favored by the emperor over the bishops of Constantinople. Thus, within this single passage, there are three groups whom Agnellus refers to as the Romans: the Romans of the ancient past, the Romans ruled by an emperor located in Constantinople, and the Romans who currently reside in the city of Rome.

It is evident in the work of Agnellus, and the sources that he employs in the construction of his history of the Ravennate bishops, that a multiplicity of Romans could be identified both during and after the existence of the exarchate. There was no single conception of Romanness that circulated in the Italian peninsula, and what one believed constituted the Roman people or the Roman state could depend largely on one's entanglements with Old and New Rome.⁴²⁸ This chapter explores various conceptions of Romanness found within the territories of the exarchate, specifically within the cities of Rome and Ravenna. It finds that a more restrictive notion of being Roman gained prominence as the inhabitants of Italy placed greater emphasis on their local affiliations. This conception, which emanated from Rome, placed the authority to legitimate or deny claims of Romanness not on a set of ethnic components, but on a narrower sense of the historical rights of the Roman people.

The Fragmentation of Italy and Roman Identity

⁴²⁷ Agnellus, *LPR* 95.

⁴²⁸ As Maskarinec puts it, the Latin sources of Italy "offer a profusion of Romans to choose from." Maskarinec, "*Who were the Romans*," 353.

One should expect to find those who identify as Romans in central and northern Italy before the establishment of the exarchate. The processes of Romanization have been the subject of a long debate that has included the usefulness of the term or what might make for an appropriate definition of it. This is especially the case for the Italian peninsula, where the term became intertwined with the nationalist aspirations of the pre-war Italian state.⁴²⁹ There are many studies, informed by widely different theoretical and methodological frameworks, that trace the impact of interactions between the Roman and non-Roman inhabitants of the peninsula. Again, the understanding of Romanization that is most useful to this study is less concerned with the long-term processes of this phenomenon. Rather, this study begins with the observable expressions of Romanness among the people of Italy, either alongside a preexisting identity or in place of another which had lapsed.

In addition to exploring the many ways in which one might become Roman, scholars have also revealed the many possible meanings that one might derive from it. It is evident that multiple senses of being Roman could exist at a given time. This is especially evident after large communities of Romans in the western regions of the state increasingly found themselves subject to non-Romans in the fifth century.⁴³⁰ Moreover, Romanness could make up a merely single aspect of one's identity, nor need it exist exclusive of others in that specific aspect.⁴³¹ Being Roman could take the form of an ethnic identity, even in the early history of the state. Many

⁴²⁹ See again Terrenato, "The Romanization of Italy," 20-27; Mouritsen, *Italian Unification*, 23-39. See also, V. Follo, "Becoming Roman Again: Roman Ethnicity and Italian Identity," in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. J. McInerney (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 541-554.

⁴³⁰ See *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.

⁴³¹ E. Dench, "Roman Identity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies*, eds. A. Barchiesi and W. Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). See again Lavan, "The Foundation of Empire? The Spread of Roman Citizenship from the Fourth Century BCE to the Third Century CE," for the differentiation of Roman citizenship and other aspects of identity.

Roman foundation myths take on the character of an *origo gentis*.⁴³² Later writers show that not only did a community of Romans exist throughout Italy, but that one could be found living beyond the peninsula.⁴³³ Before the period of Gothic rule over Italy and the foundation of the exarchate, Italy was a Roman space and those within Italy observed a Roman community existing outside of it.

A survey of sixth century sources shows that it remained possible to envision a community of Romans living throughout the peninsula. The historian Jordanes, who wrote in Latin and within the city of Constantinople, found Romans living in Italy beyond the confines of Rome and he connects them to those living in the east.⁴³⁴ Ethnographic descriptions are generally absent in both of his works, but Jordanes does employ terminology of classification to refer to the Romans as a singular people (variably a *gens*, *populum*, or *natio*) distinct from other non-Roman groups.⁴³⁵ In the *Getica*, he notes that the king of the Goths, Alaric, had hoped that if his people “settle peaceably in Italy, they would so live with the Roman people (cum Romanorum populo vivere) that men might believe them both to be of one race (ut una gens utraque credere possit).”⁴³⁶ In a more precise instance, Romans were subject to the threats of Odoacer in Ravenna and later they suffered along with some of Odoacer’s companions during a siege of that city.⁴³⁷ In the *Romana*, a short history of the Roman state, “rebellious Romans” were killed by

⁴³² Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴³³ C. Ando, “Was Rome a Polis?” *CLANT* 18 (1999): 5-34. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 81-120.

⁴³⁴ On Jordanes, see Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, 20-111; S. Doležal, “Who was Jordanes?” *Byzantion* 84 (2014): 145–64.

⁴³⁵ The Romans and Goths are the “foremost” *gentes* in Jordanes, *Getica* 35.181. The Romans as an individual *populum* are used throughout both the *Getica* and *Romana*. The Romans are among the great number of *populorum* preparing for a battle 36.191. See also, in this same passage” the curious note about the Olibriones “who were once Roman soldiers (quondam milites Romani).” In *Getica* 48.253, Romans appear to be included among all the world’s *nationes*.

⁴³⁶ Jordanes, *Getica* 152.

⁴³⁷ Odoacer executes a Roman official named Bracila in Ravenna to “inspire fear in the Romans” in Jordanes, *Getica* 243. In chapter 57, Romans are also included among those in Ravenna suffering from Theoderic’s siege of the city. In another work, Jordanes adds that Theoderic took up the rule of his own *gens* and the Roman *populi* upon taking Ravenna, *Romana* 349.

Belisarios in a siege of Naples.⁴³⁸ For Jordanes, the Roman community in Italy extends well beyond the city of Rome itself.

This notion of Romanness that ties the people of Italy to the rest of the Roman state is in line with Jordanes' recognition that the Romans were founded out of a multitude of various peoples. In his discussion of the mythic history of the Romans, he states that Romulus "out of various as it were elements he assembled a single body, and himself created the Roman people (ita ex variis quasi elementis congregavit corpus unum, populumque Romanum ipse fecit)."⁴³⁹ A similar sentiment is expressed when the narrative reached the second century B.C.E., as the peoples south of the Taurus mountains "were united to the Roman people (populo Romano conjunctae sint)," indicating the ability for non-Roman groups to assimilate into Roman society.⁴⁴⁰ Moreover, Jordanes recognizes the shared history of the late antique eastern and Roman western states, viewing both as continuations of the Roman polity founded in the mythic past. In outlining the scope of the *Romana*, Jordanes explains that he will relate the history of the *Romana Res Publica* from its foundation under Romulus to the present reign of Justinian.⁴⁴¹ Jordanes only distinguishes between their respective seats of authority and their emperors. Otherwise, he refers to the two empires of the Romans.⁴⁴² In both of his works, Jordanes describes what he understood to be the fall of the western empire of the Roman people (*gens* and

⁴³⁸ Jordanes, *Romana* 370. Recall the scene in the history of Prokopios, where the population of Naples professes their shared Romanness to Belisarios, *Wars* 5.8.7.

⁴³⁹ Jordanes, *Romana* 90.

⁴⁴⁰ Jordanes, *Romana* 227.

⁴⁴¹ Jordanes, *Romana* 2.

⁴⁴² Arcadius and Honorius took hold of both states, separated only by their centers of authority (utrumque imperium, divisim tantum sedibus, tenere coeperunt) in Jordanes, *Romana* 319. Arcadius and Honorius simply inherit both empire from Theodosius without qualification in *Getica* 29.146. The eastern and western emperors themselves are also referred to without distinction. See, for example, 31.161. In Jordanes account of Attila's funeral oration, he refers to "both empires of the Roman world (*utroque Romani urbis imperia*)," *Getica* 49.257.

populum), separating it from the surviving eastern one.⁴⁴³ That this is the case is seen in the conclusion of the *Romana*, which laments the current conditions of the singular Roman state (again called the *Romana Res Publica*) under Justinian.⁴⁴⁴ Jordanes even names this Romanía.⁴⁴⁵ In short, he perceives that the Romans of Italy and those of the east constituted a single people who shared two unequivocally Roman states.

Marcellinus Comes, who also wrote a Latin history of the Romans in sixth century Constantinople, demonstrates a similar understanding as to the constitution of the Roman people and state.⁴⁴⁶ For this author, the Romans existed throughout Italy beyond merely the city of Rome and even after the fall of the “Western empire of the Roman people (*Hesperium Romanae gentis imperium*).”⁴⁴⁷ They were subject to a Gothic attack on Milan in 539, for example, that killed “all the Romans (*omnes Romanos*)” within.⁴⁴⁸ When Totila entered the central Italian towns of Firmum and Asculum, the Roman inhabitants were murdered (*crudelitatem suam in Romanos exercuit*) after their Roman soldiers had departed the town.⁴⁴⁹ At the southern end of the peninsula, a certain Romanus and Rusticus, commanders of the eastern court of emperor Anastasios, raided the Italian littoral in the area of Tarento. Marcellinus, in recalling this expedition, calls it an attack of “Romans upon Romans.”⁴⁵⁰ In the east, affairs are framed as

⁴⁴³ *Hesperium Romanae gentis imperium* in Jordanes, *Getica* 46.243. *Hesperium regnum Romanique populi principatum* in *Romana* 345.

⁴⁴⁴ Jordanes, *Romana* 388.

⁴⁴⁵ Ambassadors are sent into Romanía to meet with the emperor Valens in Jordanes, *Getica* 25.131. Huns enter Romanía presumably by passing the Danube in 50.266. This is also depicted in the *Romana* 313. Likewise, Jordanes describes the Daci who frequently crossed the Danube into Romanía, 247. Romanía is threatened by the Parthians and Adiabenes during the time of Septimus Severus, 275.

⁴⁴⁶ B. Croke, *Count Marcellinus and His Chronicle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁴⁷ Marcellinus, *Chronicle* 576.2. On Marcellinus as a vector for Constantinopolitan propaganda, S. Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna, and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae, 527-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 90-94.

⁴⁴⁸ Marcellinus, *Chronicle* 539.3.

⁴⁴⁹ Marcellinus, *Chronicle* 545.1.

⁴⁵⁰ Marcellinus, *Chronicle* 508.

conflicts between Romans and non-Romans.⁴⁵¹ It seems that only in terms of language does Marcellinus distinguish between the Roman inhabitants of the eastern and western states.⁴⁵²

Thus, like Jordanes, Marcellinus finds that both those living throughout Gothic-ruled Italy and those coming from the eastern state belonged to the same community of Romans.

The notion that the Romans could be envisioned as a singular group living in both the east and the west accords with Greek-language sources. Some of these, like their Latin-language counterparts, describe the Gothic kingdom of Italy as originally a sort of caretaker for the Roman inhabitants of the peninsula.⁴⁵³ When hostilities eventually broke out in Italy, Justinian's expedition was presented in imperial propaganda as the restoration of Roman Italy from the illegitimate rule of the Goths.⁴⁵⁴ Agathias recalls how "Sicily, Rome and Italy cast off the yoke of

⁴⁵¹ See, for example, the Romans threatened in Anaplous, Thrace in Marcellinus *Chronicle*, 481.1; the settling of the Heruli in lands and cities of the Romans in the Balkans 512.11; and the Persians, Saracens, Tzanni, Isaurians, and Huns who attacked the Romans 441.1.

⁴⁵² Marcellinus, in the preface of his *Chronicle*, writes that the Eusebius' history written in Greek was translated by Jerome into Latin and continued in "Roman."; Again, Jerome, "the most skilled of all at Rome in Greek and Latin" translated the Old Testament into Roman; The *Romani* and *Graeci* have different names for the coins struck by Anastasios in 498.3. There are two instances, however, to a people Marcellinus names the *Achivi*. He mentions a certain Jacob, who he calls an "Achivus" by *natione* and a *paganos* by religion, and the empress Eudokia the "Achivus."⁴⁵² He may view these two individuals as members of a non-ethnically Roman and non-Christian community of Hellenes, just as he notes the existence of other groups living within Romanía. For Marcellinus' use of *natio* to refer to denote non-Roman groups or in reference to specific individuals living within the Roman state see, for example, the conquest of eastern peoples (eoas nationes) in Marcellinus, *Chronicle* 385; John (Iohannes natione Vandalus) 441.2; Illus (natione Isaurus) in 484.1. See also 419.3, which refers to the "many tribes of the neighboring races (vicinarum gentium nationes)" present in Jerusalem.

⁴⁵³ Malchus, fr. 14 in R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* vol. II (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983); Prokopios, *Wars* 5.1.9-12. On the imperial attempt to retroactively set the year 476 as the end of the western state, see B. Croke, "A.D. 476: The Manufacture of a Turning Point," *Chiron* 13 (1983): 81-120. See also Prokopios, *Wars* 6.6.3-27, in which the legitimacy of Gothic claims is weighed. Some anti-Chalcedonian writers already argue for an end to the west Roman state only few years after Odoacer's deposition of Romulus Augustulus. E. Watts, "John Rufus, Timothy Aelurus and the Fall of the Western Roman Empire," in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World*, eds. R. Mathisen and D. Shanzer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), 97-106.

⁴⁵⁴ Watts, *The Eternal Decline and Fall of Rome: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 118-134; Stouraitis, "State War Ethic and Popular Views on Warfare," in *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca. 300-1204*, ed. Y. Stouraitis (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 68-71. Jordanes in the *Romana* describes similarly the expedition against the Vandals as meant to reunite Africa with the *Res Publica*, 366. However, his motivation for the Gothic Wars focuses mainly on Justinian's concern for death of the young Gothic king Athalaric and the murder of his mother Amalasuntha, *Romana* 268 and *Getica* 59.304-306.

foreign domination and were restored to their ancient way of life.”⁴⁵⁵ Prokopios found an Roman population in Italy even while they lived under Gothic rule.⁴⁵⁶ The commander Narses, in an inscription outside Rome, used the language of liberation and restoration to describe the removal of the Goths.⁴⁵⁷ Those Romans coming from the east looking toward Italy likewise could imagine a politically separated Roman community and that would come to be reunited with the rest Romanía.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Gothic kings of Italy could present themselves and their rule in a variety of ways that were acceptable to their Roman subjects and that embraced a sense of continuity with the Roman past.⁴⁵⁸ Often cited in this respect is Theoderic’s letter to the emperor Anastasius, in which, among other similar claims, he states that “our government is in imitation of yours” so that he might learn to rule properly over Romans.⁴⁵⁹ In further letters preserved in Cassiodorus’ *Variae*, the Gothic kingdom acknowledges that rule over the peninsula was nominally in partnership with the Romans, similar to how the Greek-language sources sometimes portray their relationship.⁴⁶⁰ Other sources praise Theoderic using rhetoric traditionally associated with Roman emperors.⁴⁶¹ Jordanes even notes that Theoderic exchanged

⁴⁵⁵ See the preface of Agathias’ *History*.

⁴⁵⁶ Prokopios, *Wars* 6.6.18; See again the dialogue at Naples, 5.8.7-11.

⁴⁵⁷ The inscription reads, “libertate urbis Romae ac totius Italiae restituta.” *CIL* 6.1199a.

⁴⁵⁸ On Theoderic’s imitation of Roman imperial models, see J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); P. Heather, *The Restoration of Rome: Barbarian Popes and Imperial Pretenders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); C. Scholl, “Imitatio Imperii? Elements of Imperial Rule in the Barbarian Successor States of the Roman West,” in *Transcultural Approaches to the Concept of Imperial Rule in the Middle Ages*, eds. C. Scholl, T.R. Gebhardt, and J. Clauß (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017); E. Bach, “Théodoric, Romain ou barbare,” *Byzantion* 25/27 (1955-1957): 413-420.

⁴⁵⁹ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 1.1; For an example of the difference between rhetoric and reality, see S. Bjornlie, “Law, Ethnicity and Taxes in Ostrogothic Italy: a Case for Continuity, Adaptation, and Departure,” *EME* 22.2 (2014): 138-170.

⁴⁶⁰ See, for example, the letter from Athalaric to Justin in Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 8.1.

⁴⁶¹ See again the *Excerpta Valesiana* 60, which admits the positive reputation that Gothic rule may maintained at the time of writing, before ultimately undermining it. S.J.B. Barnish, “The “Anonymus Valesianus” II as a Source for the Last Years of Theoderic.” Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople*, 94-97; T. Kovács, “Some Remarks on Anonymus Valesianus’ Pars Posterior,” *Chronica: Annual of the Institute of History* 13 (2017): 5-16.

his customary Gothic clothing for imperial dress.⁴⁶² Thus, in the survey of the sources above, it is possible to see an Italian Roman population that existed throughout the peninsula at various points leading up to the formation of the exarchate. Many of this population accepted the Romanness of the east Roman state and those inhabiting it, and their own Roman identity was mutually acknowledged. This does not mean that the perception expressed by these sources, or even by an individual author, is always consistent. Affiliations with a broad Roman community may not always be as broad or deep as the sources sometimes suggest.⁴⁶³ The point here is that there *could be* a reciprocal acknowledgement between those Romans in the west and those in the east. An inclusive rhetoric of Romanness was utilized by both Latin and Greek-language sources to connect the inhabitants of Italy to an east Roman population and state.

This broader conception of Romanness, which could unify the people of Italy with the rest of Romanía, is less frequently expressed during the period of the exarchate. Already there are signs of more exclusive definitions circulating in the Gothic period that deny the self-professed identities of those in the east. Cassiodorus refers to Greeks not only in language, but seemingly as a distinct people.⁴⁶⁴ Another letter questions Justinian’s respect for the “Roman name.”⁴⁶⁵ Gregory I (590-604), in a letter to the empress Constantina, wonders at the customs of the “Greeks” over those of the Romans.⁴⁶⁶ Even if this is merely a reference to religious rite, the customs of those in the east appear entirely strange to Gregory and contrast with those of the “Roman and all the Western parts.” At times, Gothic rulers tried to accentuate ancient prejudices

⁴⁶² Jordanes, *Getica* 47.295.

⁴⁶³ Ando, “Sovereignty, Territoriality and Universalism in the Aftermath of Caracalla,” in *Citizenship and Empire in Europe 200-1900: The Antonine Constitution after 1800 Years*, ed. C. Ando (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016), 7-26.

⁴⁶⁴ See, for example, Cassiodorus, *Variae* 5.17, wherein the republic is contrasted with the Africans and the Greeks.

⁴⁶⁵ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 11.13. In contrast to Justinian, the Gothic kings can be perceived as the upholders of the Roman legal tradition in Italy. See Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna, and Constantinople*, 216-253.

⁴⁶⁶ Gregory, *Letters* 4.30

to their subjects against the Greeks.⁴⁶⁷ This perception of a Greek east has a parallel in the Frankish literature and in the *History* of the Paul the Deacon, wherein the Roman people are generally confined to the Italian peninsula.⁴⁶⁸ On the other hand, Jordanes, who views the Romans as supplanting the empire of the Greeks (a term that will return to the Latin naming patterns) in the east, besmirches the Romanness of the city of Rome itself – finding it undeserving of such a name.⁴⁶⁹ Romans sources, while at times portraying the conquest of Italy as a liberation, also interpret Italian identities more ambiguously.⁴⁷⁰ These mutual feelings of separation, already extent before the exarchate, were amplified under it. East Roman notions of Roman identity and those developed within Italy diverged to the extent that both groups would come to reject each other’s claims to Romanness.

The exarchate itself, officially known as the province of Ravenna (*provincia* or *partes Ravennatum*), stretched from Ravenna to Rome and was united by a thin strip of land that followed the *via Amerina* and *Flaminia*.⁴⁷¹ At the head of this administrative unit was the exarch, who resided in Ravenna and held both civil and military authority over the entire province.⁴⁷² These officials were most often sent from Constantinople and the duration to their service usually extended well beyond the norm for the governors of other provinces. The exarchate included further sub-divisions, each governed by a *dux* who was primarily responsible for

⁴⁶⁷ Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800* (Rome: British School at Rome, 1984), 146. See again Cassiodorus, *Variae* 5.17. Prokopios has Totila warns the Roman senate about the “Graeci” in *Wars* 7.9.12.

⁴⁶⁸ L. Sarti, “From Romanus to Graecus: The Identity and Perceptions of the Byzantines in the Frankish West,” *Journal of Medieval History* 44.2 (2018): 131-150. Paul the Deacon distinguishes the *Romani* as the provincial inhabitants from the *Romanus Populus*, who are those occupying the city of Rome. Maskarinec, “Who were the Romans.”

⁴⁶⁹ Jordanes, *Romana* 379.

⁴⁷⁰ M. Kouroumali, “The Justinianic Reconquest of Italy: Imperial Campaigns and Local Responses,” in *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, eds. A. Sarantis and N. Christie (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 969-999.

⁴⁷¹ Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 49. “Exarchate” may have originated as a popular term and seems to have become more common after the fall of the Roman province in 751. For an account of the territories within the Exarchate, see G. Ravegnani, *Gli esarchi d’Italia* (Rome: Aracne, 2011), 47-48; Herrin, *Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 215-216.

⁴⁷² On the history of the exarchate, and the mandates and careers of its exarchs, see Ravegnani, *Gli esarchi d’Italia*.

managing local affairs.⁴⁷³ Although this is in theory the way in which the province of Italy was to be governed, in practice the authority of the exarch over the individual cities and their local officials fluctuated.

The weakening of exarchal control over the province of Italy can be attributed, in part, to the intensification of reliance on local power bases in the place of imperial authority – a phenomenon which has received a variety of names.⁴⁷⁴ That is, as the ties that bound individuals to their local communities strengthened and those to Constantinople weakened, these territories increasingly asserted their autonomy as their inhabitants felt disconnected from central authorities. Much of this has been attributed to the organization of the exarchate itself. The independence allowed to military officers by this administrative structure encouraged them to develop local relationships and bases of power, becoming more beholden to these communities than to sporadic interventions from the Constantinopolitan court.⁴⁷⁵ At same time, the imperial court in Constantinople and the exarch at Ravenna became increasingly unable to meet local needs, especially protection from the Lombards, further exasperating sentiments of separation and encouraging reliance on local sources of authority.⁴⁷⁶ The failures of the Roman state to effectively support to the duchies of the exarchate increased the authority invested in local officials who were better able to serve the communities they were responsible for.

Although there were certainly many ways in which the exarchate was connected to rest of Romanía, these bonds appear to have been outweighed by the ways in which they were distinct.

⁴⁷³ Herrin, *Ravenna*, 214-222.

⁴⁷⁴ On this process in the exarchate, deemed separatism, see Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, especially the summary of this argument on 145; Regionalism in Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l'Empire byzantin au VIIe siècle*; “Italianization” in T.F.X. Noble, *The Republic of Saint Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 57-58; Particularism of 5th century Italy in R.W. Mathisen, “Avitus, Italy and the East in A.D. 455-456,” *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 232-247.

⁴⁷⁵ See the summations in Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 162; “The Background of Byzantine Relation with Italy in the Ninth Century,” 29-30.

⁴⁷⁶ Noble, *The Republic of Saint Peter*, 15.

Unlike in the themes of southern Italy, for example, the province of Italy lacked some of the ties that bound it to the rest of Romanía, and what ties there were became frayed. The province lacked the same movements of people that have been seen to connect other parts of Romanía.⁴⁷⁷ It housed a much smaller Greek-speaking community, mostly confined to immediate vicinity of Ravenna and the monastic circles of Rome.⁴⁷⁸ Though certainly an imperfect measure, the exarchate lacked the same preponderance of personal names found in southern Italy.⁴⁷⁹ The reincorporation of the central and northern parts of Italy under Justinian, revealed and exacerbated cultural differences between the Italian Roman and East Romans. Knowledge of Greek in within the territory of the exarchate had clearly diminished and Latin sources associate the Roman language with Latin, while Greek-speaking was seen as foreign.⁴⁸⁰ Some scholars have also emphasized the multiple religious controversies that placed Italy at odds with Constantinople as a source of division.⁴⁸¹ These conditions encouraged feelings of separation to develop between the western and eastern parts of the Roman state, allowing for multiple notions of Romanness to evolve.

⁴⁷⁷ Brown notes the difference between northern and southern Italy in this respect, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 65 and 147-150. Both during and after the Gothic period, there was a movement of Italians away from Rome toward the imperial capital in Constantinople. von Falkenhausen, “Roma greca. Greci e civiltà greca a Roma nel Medioevo,” in *Roma e il suo territorio nel medioevo: le fonti scritte fra tradizione e innovazione*, eds. C. Carbonett, S. Lucà, and M. Signorini (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2015), 39-72.

⁴⁷⁸ von Falkenhausen, “Roma greca.”; Herrin, “Aspects of the Process of Hellenization in the Early Middle Ages,” *Margins and Metropolis: Authority across the Byzantine Empire*. Brown suggests that the impression of these monastic circles has been outsized and that they do not appear to be particularly aligned with the interests of the Constantinopolitan court, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 144.

⁴⁷⁹ For an onomastic study of Ravenna, see Guillou, “Esarcato e Pentapoli, regione psicologica dell’Italia bizantina,” *Studi Romagnoli* 18 (1967): 297-319; and “Demography and Culture in the Exarchate of Ravenna,” *a Giuseppe Ermini* (Spoleto, 1970), 201-220. Brown critiques the methodology of such studies on Ravennate naming patterns, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 67.

⁴⁸⁰ Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l’Empire byzantin au 7^e siècle*, 77-88. On the association between Romanness and the Latin language in earlier periods, see J.N. Adams, “Romanitas and the Latin Language,” *CQ* 53 (2003): 184-205.

⁴⁸¹ Much of this has been attributed to the policy of iconoclasm, but Herrin identifies the issue as increased imperial taxation. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 329-43.

Continuity and Denial in Old Rome

The decoupling of the province of Italy and Romanía, and the multiple notions of Romanness that developed out of this context, are demonstrated in the literature of the papal court, which offered an alternative understanding of Romanness and one that was attractive as it lacked the ethnic criteria for the title of Roman emperor. After the campaigns of Justinian, a local *dux* and the senate were responsible for the affairs of the city of Rome and were placed under the authority of an official in Ravenna.⁴⁸² As the senate ceased to function in the early seventh century, the Roman church adopted many of the responsibilities of public welfare and became involved in protecting the city from the threat of the Lombards.⁴⁸³ Church officials not only assumed the obligations of the city's traditional leaders, but also adopted the symbols of their authority and occupied space generally associated with Roman rule.⁴⁸⁴ In doing so, the pope and his officials became the leading political force in the city of Rome, surpassing the nominal authority of the duke and the exarch in Ravenna.

The inhabitants of Rome and the papal court were generally receptive to east Roman authority, even if some sources betray a wariness of their "Greekness" as noted above. Various Latin sources refer to an emperor of the Romans residing in Constantinople, prayers were offered for the well-being of the emperor, and official documents continued to make use of imperial regnal years.⁴⁸⁵ The letters of Pope Gregory I to emperor Maurikios relate that all are praying for

⁴⁸² On Justinian's reorganization of the province and its deleterious effect on the senatorial aristocracy, see M.R. Salzman, *The Falls of Rome: Crises, Resilience, and Resurgence in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

⁴⁸³ On the senate, Barnish, "Transformation and Survival in the Western Senatorial Aristocracy, c. A.D. 400-700," *PBSR* 56 (1988): 120-155. This could include such matters as the repair of public works and the provision of foodstuffs. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 18. On the interactions with the Lombards, see J.T. Hallenbeck, *Pavia and Rome: the Lombard Monarchy and the Papacy in the Eighth Century* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1982).

⁴⁸⁴ See, for example, pope John VI's residence on the Palatine amid a conflict with Justinian II. Noble, *The Republic of Saint Peter*, 18.

⁴⁸⁵ Herrin, "Constantinople, Rome and the Franks in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *Margins and Metropolis*.

his success at the head of the Roman Republic.⁴⁸⁶ The Maria Regina iconographical type, which depicts Mary using the portraiture of an east Roman empress, is to be found throughout Rome and suggests a connection between notions of imperial authority and the court in Constantinople.⁴⁸⁷ Perhaps the most obvious example of the city's reception to a Roman emperor is their response to the elevation of Phokas. Gregory, alongside the Roman senate and clergy, physically received Phokas' imperial portraiture in a ceremony of acclamation before the palace on the Palatine.⁴⁸⁸ In addition to this, two letters of congratulations were sent in which Gregory claims that the emperorship was much to the joy of the "whole people of the republic."⁴⁸⁹ Phokas himself had a column, originally dedicated to Diocletian, erected in the Forum Romanum for the first time since the fourth century and on which an inscription praised the emperor for his protection of Italy.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, the cause for the celebration in which the column was raised was Phokas' reconstitution of the Pantheon as a church.⁴⁹¹ This project, as well as other projects of urban renewal, indicates the reciprocal relationship that could exist between the city of Rome and the emperors at the beginning of the seventh century.

Such a positive reception of a Roman emperor by the city of Rome was seldom replicated, or at least recorded, after Phokas (his column was the last of its kind raised in the city) until imperial accession became associated with the Carolingians. Rome, like other cities under

⁴⁸⁶ Gregory I, *Letters* 5.30

⁴⁸⁷ M. Lidova, "The Earliest Images of Maria Regina in Rome and Byzantine Imperial Iconography," in *Niš and Byzantium*, ed. M. Rakocija (Nis, 2010), 231-243; J. Osborne, "The Cult of Maria Regina in Early Medieval Rome," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 21: 95-106. For the debate about the identity of the artists and the categorization of the style of the sixth century image found in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, see A.M. Labatt, *Byzantine Rome* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2022), 1-14.

⁴⁸⁸ S. Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno. Alle origini del Medioevo* (Rome: Viella, 2004), 119.

⁴⁸⁹ Gregory I, *Letters* 13.31 and 38, as well as 39 to Leontia.

⁴⁹⁰ For the inscription, see *CIL* VI no. 1200.

⁴⁹¹ G. Kalas, "The Divisive Politics of Phocas (602-610) and the Last Imperial Monument in Rome," *Antiquité Tardive: Revue Internationale d'Histoire et d'Archéologie* 25 (2017): 173-190. On the consecration of the church, see the *LP* 69.2.; E. Thunø, "The Pantheon in the Middle Ages," in *The Pantheon from Antiquity to the Present*, eds. T.A. Marder and M.W. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

the exarchate, sought its autonomy from the state based in Constantinople and its people viewed themselves as distinct from the ethnic community of the Romans in the east. These feelings of separation manifested in an independent political entity in the middle part of the seventh century, but the foundations for it were already apparent in the preceding centuries. The *Liber Pontificalis* (hereafter the *LP*) is particularly well-suited to exhibit how Romanness became reimagined in this context of a separation from the east Roman state. This text, which provides a biography of each Roman pontiff, was likely first compiled in the sixth century, and was followed by periodic additions by members of the papal court through the ninth century.⁴⁹² Scholars have seen in this text a concerted effort to define and communicate outward a conception of Roman identity that intertwines its ancient foundations with the Christian religion.⁴⁹³ Through an analysis of this text, it is possible to infer what constitutes being Roman according to the papal tradition, whence derived the authority of the Roman emperor, and how those who lived in the east fit into this worldview.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of references to the Romans in the *LP* relate to those living within the confines of the Italian city of Rome. This most often refers to the general populace of the city, whom the *LP* names the Roman people (*Romanus populus*) or, more frequently, simply the Romans. The designation also applies to the military and religious institutions, as well as those participating in them, all of which are localized to the city. Unlike the other Latin and Greek-language texts surveyed above, the *LP* communicates a much narrower sense of whom or what may be considered Roman, and it is reticent to identify Romans outside of the city proper.

⁴⁹² R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), xiv-xvi; Two editions are dated to the first half of the 6th century. R. McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy: The Liber Pontificalis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1-37. It appears that, starting in the seventh century, essentially contemporaneous additions were made to the *LP* after the death of each pope.

⁴⁹³ McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy*, 38-67; “Romanness’ and Rome in the early Middle Ages,” in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 143-155.

The narrative importance and contours of Romanness in the *LP* become evident as early as the sixth century material, when invocations of the Roman people become frequent, and discussions of their concerns motivate the narrative of the text. In the *LP*, The Roman people appear as a legitimizing force that accounts for both the authority invested in the pope and the rejection of imperial interests.

The central importance of the Roman people can be found beginning in the *vita* of pope Silverius (536-537), who was placed in the papacy by the Gothic king Theodahad, a fact for which he is initially criticized by the text. Moreover, this *vita* is particularly important as it serves as the end of the second edition of the *LP* and the beginning of the later additions to the text, meaning that it exists in two parts written decades apart.⁴⁹⁴ The early material praises the interventions of Belisarios who occupied the city of Rome and defended it from the Goths. Twice it honors him for fighting in the “name of Rome (nomen Romanum),” indicating the acceptance of east Roman authority in the city. At the same time, the text scorns the former Gothic rulers for their actions against the Romans.⁴⁹⁵ The agency of the Roman people is both the reason that Belisarios is lauded as a defender of the Romans and that the Goths are condemned for the harm they caused.

However, later additions to the text advance a more critical approach to imperial intervention and reclaim the reputation of Silverius. Both reversals are framed by each individual’s treatment of the Roman people. According to the *LP*, Antonina, the wife of Belisarios, charged Silverius, whom the text admits had been the subject of much slander, with

⁴⁹⁴ Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs*, xliii. The nature of this *vita*, which is initially more hostile toward this pope and contains a number of chronological errors, is likely a result of a later addition to a version of the *LP* compiled during the papacy of Silverius.

⁴⁹⁵ *LP* 60.4-5.

conspiring with the Goths to reclaim the city.⁴⁹⁶ The author of the text, in making sense of these allegations, assumes that they must have been the result of some slight not only against Silverius, but against all of the Romans - closely linking together the interests of the two. Belisarios, after the deposition of Silverius, was subsequently asked by the emperor Justinian to answer about his “dealings with the Romans,” who petitioned the emperor soon after due to their displeasure over the new pope Vigilius’ mistreatment of “his very own people.”⁴⁹⁷ Vigilius was apparently so offensive to the people of Rome that the “plebs and populace” attacked him, driving him away.⁴⁹⁸ Already in the sixth century entries to the *LP*, and especially in the later reflections, the inhabitants of Rome constituted a collective force whose state of wellness is the main factor in the portrayal of those who ruler over them. Furthermore, there is already a clear connection between the citizens of Rome and the pope, as the Romans place themselves at odds with the imperial court in Constantinople and its attempts to interfere in the affairs of the papacy. Even the much-maligned Vigilius is suddenly praised for his defense of religious Orthodoxy in the face of imperial pressure.⁴⁹⁹ The *LP* frames both popes positively in response to the concerns of Constantinopolitan overreach in the institutions and affairs of the Roman people.

The importance of the Romans as a legitimizing body remains forefront as the *LP* turns to the arrival of Narses in Italy, a period which developed a nearly mythic significance in both the Latin and Greek-language historical traditions.⁵⁰⁰ The *LP* describes Totila’s capture of Rome, not long after the imprisonment of Vigilius in Constantinople, in which he is supposed to have

⁴⁹⁶ *LP* 60.8.

⁴⁹⁷ *LP* 61.3.

⁴⁹⁸ *LP* 61.4.

⁴⁹⁹ *LP* 61.6. On the image of the position of the pope that the text constructs, see Noble, “A New Look at the Liber Pontificalis,” *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 23 (1985): 347-358.

⁵⁰⁰ The *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum* 20 preserves essentially the same account as the *LP*. See again the *De Administrando Imperio* 27.59.

shown great restraint, even treating the “Romans like a father with his children.”⁵⁰¹ The favor shown toward the Roman people is underscored here, as it is again when Narses defeated Totila and “the Senate and emperor... rejoiced that God had given peace to the Romans.”⁵⁰² In what follows, the text provides two perspectives on Narses’ time in Italy – the authorial perspective and that of the Roman people. The Romans, bristling under the presence of Narses and driven by malice, threatened the imperial couple Justin II and Sophia that “it would be better for the Romans to serve the Goths than the Greeks when the eunuch Narses is a ruler who subjects us to slavery and our most pious prince does not know it. Either deliver us from his hand or we and the Roman citizenry will serve the barbarians.”⁵⁰³ This is the first clear mention of east Romans as “Greeks” in the *LP*, coming exactly as the citizens of Rome collectively reject imperial authority for its supposed negligence. The authorial perspective does not appear to take the side of the citizens, as it describes Narses as quite beholden to the opinion of the citizens of Rome and as being dismayed by the rejection of its people.⁵⁰⁴ In both cases, the central principal of his rejection by the Roman people and acceptance by the view of the text rests in his service to the city and its inhabitants. In rejection, however, his supposed failing of the inhabitants of Rome corresponded with a questioning of his Roman identity.

The emperors in Constantinople come away relatively unscathed in these instances, as the blame is mostly placed on imperial agents. They are accepted by the citizens of Rome and asked to mediate on their behalf. Justinian even honors senators from the city as “befitted Roman consuls” – an acknowledgement of his appropriateness to do so.⁵⁰⁵ This acceptance is also

⁵⁰¹ *LP* 61.7.

⁵⁰² *LP* 61.8.

⁵⁰³ *LP* 63.3.

⁵⁰⁴ *LP* 63.3-4.

⁵⁰⁵ *LP* 61.7.

implied by the contrast above between imperial rule and Gothic. The threat made against the Constantinopolitan court was that a “barbarian” administration, which did not adhere to the text’s expectations of Romanness, would replace the presumably Roman rule of Justinian. The text only refers to the court as Greek when it perceived that this administration had lapsed in its duties toward the Romans.

The *vitae* that follow those of Silverius and Vigilius have less to say about the relationship between the city of Rome and the emperor in Constantinople. However, the text’s response to the emperors of Phillipikos (711-713) in the eighth century shows the clear rejection of an emperor on the basis of Romanness, and its justification remains founded upon the collective interests of the Roman people. After Phillipikos attempted to introduce Monothelite religious policies in Italy, “a majority of the Roman people” refused to read the name of the emperor in mass, to accept his letters, and to bear the image of the emperor on coins or within the church.⁵⁰⁶ This response inverted the ways in which the inhabitants of Rome had traditionally accepted Roman emperors, as especially evident in the example of Phokas. At the same time, the inhabitants of Rome rejected the local arm of imperial authority, the city’s *dux*, Peter. Soon after a “civil war” took place within Rome, when a certain Peter acquired the dukedom of Rome with imperial consent. The dividing lines of the conflict fell upon religious sympathies. The faction in favor of the imperial *dux* was referred to as the “defenders of the heretic,” while the faction wishing to replace him was called the “Christian one.” In doing so, the text reveals the central importance of local expectations of proper Christianity, as conceived by the authors of the text, in the acceptance of Roman authority over the city. The recognition of imperial authority was only restored upon the accession of emperor in Anastasios, who had

⁵⁰⁶ *LP* 90.10.

deposed Phillipikos and whose Christian beliefs were deemed appropriate by the curators of the *LP*. This episode elaborates upon the precedent seen with Narses. The grounds upon which the *LP* might deny the authority of a Roman emperor are located in the common will of the city's inhabitants.

Just as the *LP* describes the authority of the citizens of Rome to reject the authority of others, so too do they have the agency to elevate individuals to positions of power. This rhetorical argument of the collective will of the Roman people is ultimately among those employed in the naming of Carolingian emperors as Roman sovereigns. In addition to the examples of imperial acclamation of emperors like Phokas, the people of Rome could also confer authority upon the pope as their representative. The *LP* records that in 768 “the whole assembly of the Roman people from greatest to least,” alongside the members of the military and clergy, together elected Stephen III as pope.⁵⁰⁷ Likewise, pope Eugene II in 824 was elected by “all the Romans” and Benedict III in 855 by the “whole Roman people.”⁵⁰⁸ An election in 844 was so divisive “as then usually happens,” that factions formed, each physically fighting in the promotion of its own candidate.⁵⁰⁹ The *LP* establishes the pope as the representative of the Roman people, confirmed by their collective sovereignty, and in the advancement of their interests.

The *LP*, in narrating the separation of the city of Rome from Constantinopolitan authority, contrasts the relationship between the Romans and the pope with that of the Romans and the emperors. Many of these moments occur under Gregory II (715-735), who guided the city as it further asserted its autonomy from the emperor in Constantinople. The *LP* describes

⁵⁰⁷ *LP* 96.10.

⁵⁰⁸ *LP* 101.2 for Eugene and 106.13. for Benedict.

⁵⁰⁹ *LP* 104.4.

plots that formed against Gregory, who had gained the enmity of the emperors for his refusal to implement a province-wide tax, for his protection of churches from imperial rapacity, and for his rejection of a Constantinopolitan imposed pope.⁵¹⁰ The plots against Gregory were first rejected by “God’s judgement” and then by the Romans, who killed and exiled the various imperial agents. The Romans and nearby Lombard dukes later warded off another attempt to remove Gregory, by refusing officials sent by the Ravennate exarch Paul. The Roman people also rebuffed a third attempt, this time by a Campanian duke apparently in league with the emperor.⁵¹¹ Finally, after the exarch Eutychius’ failed attempt to remove Gregory, the “great and small” citizens of Rome “bound themselves under oath never to permit a pontiff who was a zealot for the Christian faith and a defender of the churches to be harmed or removed.”⁵¹² The *LP* applies clear motivations to each of these attempts to replace Gregory. The people of Rome took the side of the pope as the recipient of their sovereignty and against the emperor in Constantinople whom the text now frames as an outright enemy to the interests of Rome.

Gregory does not quite usurp the authority of the emperor over Rome. In fact, the *LP* has him urge the Christians not to abandon the Roman empire.⁵¹³ Rather, the text places the pontiff as the one who attempted to hold the Roman state together against the divisive policies of the emperor. In associating the collective will of the Roman people to the pope, the text reveals a model for the disintegration of the Roman state. In this model, the emperors in Constantinople ceased to adhere to the expectations of Roman rule, distancing themselves from the idea of a Roman empire, rather than interpreting the split as a result of papal autonomy.

⁵¹⁰ *LP* 91.14-16.

⁵¹¹ *LP* 91.16.

⁵¹² *LP* 91.18.

⁵¹³ *LP* 91.19.

The basis for the continuity of a Roman state absent a Roman emperor in Constantinople is evident in several rebellions recorded by the *LP*. Scholars have seen these events as evidence of separatism, similar to how some have viewed the rebellions in Sicily. In some instances, a desire for autonomy entirely distinct from the Romans in the east does appear to be the case. In others, however, the actors did not actively seek separation, but rather appear to be working under the same set of assumptions that have been seen in the conflicts above between the pope and emperor in Constantinople. That is, they work under the assumption that the emperor is a figure who can be both removed and replaced when no longer acting in the interests of the Romans. Such an understanding of the basis of imperial authority is not unlike how eastern Romans understood this position. The difference between these two notions of Romanness amounts to their conceptions of who the Romans are and of what the Roman state is – both of which the *LP* more narrowly defines.

After the emperor Leon III introduced his iconoclastic policies to the Italian peninsula and attempted to oust pope Gregory, the *LP* records a rebellion that broke out and it frames that rebellion both in terms of separatism from and belonging to the Roman state. Venice and the cities of the Pentapolis, places still under east Roman control, rallied to support the pope against the threat of the exarch in Ravenna and they elected their own *dukes*, presumably replacing those confirmed by Constantinople.⁵¹⁴ The sequence of these events is not drawn in detail, but the *LP* writes that these actions were meant to guarantee the freedom of both the pope and those individual cities under east Roman rule. While there has been some question as to the historicity of these rebellions, the concern here is rather how the *LP* communicates the relationship of the people of Rome and Italy more broadly with the Roman state.⁵¹⁵ This rebellion demonstrates a

⁵¹⁴ *LP* 91.17.

⁵¹⁵ Davis accepts the historicity of this rebellion. See Davis, *The Eighth-Century Popes*, 11 n. 52.

desire for autonomy from imperial rule or it at least envisions that such a separation was possible in a way that is not seen in the Sicilian rebellions discussed in chapter 2. After this declaration of autonomy, the ambitions of the conflict rapidly changed character. After initially seeking their own autonomy, “the whole of Italy adopted a plan: they would elect themselves an emperor and take him to Constantinople.”⁵¹⁶ This suggests that the rebellious cities sought to change their arrangement with the Roman state, but that they did so while still envisioning their participation within that entity. That is, they seemed dissatisfied specifically with the Constantinopolitan court and the exarch in Ravenna, but they did not reject the idea of a Roman empire itself. The argument of the *LP* is that those in alliance with the pope, the people of Rome, and now of Italy more broadly, have their own right to promote an emperor of the Romans. For the *LP*, the authority of the emperor of the Romans rests in the expectations of the citizens of Italian Rome specifically, not of Romanía as a whole.

A similar rebellion occurred, again under Gregory II, and some have interpreted this conflict in terms the casting off imperial authority, but the *LP* likewise represents this as a contest for the Roman state. In this case, a rebellion broke out in Tuscany led by a an otherwise unknown Petasius, who took the name of Tiberius upon his acclamation. It appears that Tiberius attempted “to usurp the rule of the Roman empire for himself,” rather than do away with it entirely or establish something new in Italy.⁵¹⁷ Coinage produced for Tiberius, perhaps at nearby Blera, depicts him in imperial regalia and with an inscription that names him as the victorious Augustus.⁵¹⁸ It is stated that this threat against the Roman state frightened the authorities in

⁵¹⁶ *LP* 91.17. Noble confines the aspirations of these events to Italy and notes Gregory’s concern over a rival emperor in Italy. This could be the historical reality, but the rhetorical suggestion of the text is that was a contest for the entirety of a state and a new Roman emperor would be placed in Constantinople. It is not quite framed as the end of “Byzantine rule.” Noble, *The Republic of Saint Peter*, 30-32.

⁵¹⁷ *LP* 91.23.

⁵¹⁸ F. Füeg, “Byzanz: Zu Prägungen aus dem 8. bis 11. Jahrhundert - Teil 1,” *Schweizer Münzblätter* (1999): 73-75.

Ravenna, but pope Gregory resolved these concerns by sending Rome's army to defeat the usurper, whose head he sent to Constantinople. Gregory's resolution of this conflict elevates the role of the pope as the protector of the Roman state in contrast to the imperial capabilities as expressed through the exarch in Ravenna. Likewise, the papal efforts to protect the state went unrecognized by the emperor, as "not even this made the emperor bestow full favor on the Romans." The *LP*, in the *vita* of Gregory, maintains the centrality of the Roman people and identifies their representative as the pope in contrast to the emperor. It also emphasizes the responsibilities of the pope as the physical and spiritual protector of the people of Rome and, beginning with Gregory, introduces the idea that the temporal responsibilities of the pope extend to the lands in Italy traditionally under the authority of the emperor.⁵¹⁹ Roman rule is seen as something bestowed and removed independent of Constantinopolitan opinions and left in the hands of the inhabitants of Rome and their pope.

The formal break between Rome and Constantinople during the papacy of Stephen II employed the notions of Romanness that had been developed throughout the text in justifying the separation from the authority of the emperor. That is, the *LP* argues that because the Roman emperor had failed in his duty toward the people of Rome, he can be rejected and replaced with a new emperor. The *LP* relies upon this rhetoric in its explanation as to the invitation of the Frankish kings into the affairs of Italy and the crowning of Charlamagne as emperor of the Romans.

According to the *LP*, while the Lombard king Aistulf threatened and insulted the Roman people and the pope, Stephen turned to the emperor in Constantinople to deliver the city and "the whole province of Italy" from danger.⁵²⁰ The deliverance of "the whole province of Italy" is

⁵¹⁹ Noble, *The Republic of Saint Peter*, 40-60.

⁵²⁰ *LP* 94.9.

reminiscent of the phrase used to describe Narses protection of the Roman people, an act in which he was successful and for which he was praised in the text. In this instance, however, the emperor did not come to the rescue and imperial interests were explicitly occupied with concern for the recovery of Ravenna, leaving Rome left to fend for itself.⁵²¹ At the same time as the text introduces the abandonment of the city by the emperor, it heightens the Lombard threat, emphasizing Aistulf's rage and his threats against the Roman citizenry.⁵²² In the midst of these pressures, the *LP* states that Stephen called together the "whole Roman assembly and the whole people" to pray that they may be saved from this precarity.⁵²³ It is in this complete absence of imperial support that the text asserts the temporal authority of the pope as the leader of the "State of the Romans" and as one with responsibility over the territories and inhabitants of the exarchate.⁵²⁴ The text rejects the continuity of a Roman state and Roman emperor in the east, a culmination of the belief that such titles can only be bestowed by the people of Rome.

The rhetorical impact of the papal vision of Romanness is evident when Pepin returned the exarchal lands to St. Peter and the state of the Romans.⁵²⁵ The pope received control over the east Roman province of Italy, a tacit rejection of the claims of the Roman emperor in Constantinople. Since the emperor in Constantinople was no longer viewed as Roman by the standard of the text, it was possible and necessary to replace him, similar to how the rebellions of the Pentapolitans and of Tiberius Petasius were framed. When the narrative introduces Pepin, the text begins a sudden legitimization of this figure and the papal relationships with the Franks. A fictitious relationship is developed between previous popes and Frankish kings, who like the

⁵²¹ *LP* 94.17. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*, 95-97.

⁵²² *LP* 94.10.

⁵²³ *LP* 94.10.

⁵²⁴ *LP* 94.33.

⁵²⁵ *LP* 94.26.

Romans, have suffered at the hands of the Lombards. Stephen and Pepin then continue this purportedly long-standing association.⁵²⁶ The text is quick to emphasize the orthodoxy of Pepin, and his role as a servant to the Romans is physically displayed when he prostrates himself before the pontiff.⁵²⁷ In doing so, he meets the established expectations of Roman emperors, though he himself is not named one.

The imperial title was applied to an emperor outside of Constantinople with the coronation of Charlemagne and its justification made use of the notions of Romanness that the text had papal court had communicated throughout the *LP*. How exactly Charlamagne himself understood the title emperor of the Romans has been debated, but, for the *LP*, his coronation had a clear basis.⁵²⁸ Charlemagne was a rightful emperor because all the Romans recognized “how greatly he loved the holy Roman church and its vicar,” and they acclaimed him “with one accord” as Augustus.⁵²⁹ The scene of acclamation is reminiscent of previous Roman emperors, like that of Phokas, placing Charlemagne directly in the line of Roman emperors. Likewise, a descendant of Charlemagne, Louis II, was found to act in a manner “laid down by Roman emperors of old.”⁵³⁰ Thus, the *LP* tells a story of uninterrupted Roman continuity with the ancient past and a narrative about Romanness that was continually crafted from the sixth century onward. It was not the only view of Romanness that circulated within the city itself, and the extent to which the people of Rome were conscious of the papal traditions of Romanness is

⁵²⁶ See again *LP* 94.33.

⁵²⁷ *LP* 94.25. Davis, *The Lives of Eighth Century Popes*, 62 n. 61. Pepin received the title *patricius Romanus* from Stephen. D.H. Miller, “The Roman Revolution of the Eighth Century: a Study of the Ideological Background of the Papal Separation from Byzantium and Alliance with the Franks,” *MS* 36 (1974): 79-133.

⁵²⁸ Sarti, “Frankish Romanness and Charlemagne’s Empire,” *Speculum* 91.4 (2016): 1040-1058. On papal authority to crown emperors after Charlemagne, see S. Groth, “How to Become Emperor – John VIII and the Role of the Papacy in the 9th Century,” in *Transcultural Approaches to the Concept of Imperial Rules in the Middle Ages*, eds. C. Scholl, T.R. Gebhardt, and J. Clauß (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), 117-138.

⁵²⁹ *LP* 98.23.

⁵³⁰ *LP* 105.111.

subject to debate.⁵³¹ But the papal vision as expressed through the *LP* is clear. It legitimized the Romanness of the emperors in Constantinople and then the Carolingians by emphasizing the collective will of a more narrowly defined Roman people.

By naming a Frankish emperor of the Romans, the authors of the *LP* denied the Romanness of the emperor in Constantinople and those living under his authority, who received the latent ethnonym of “Greek.” In addition to certain “Greek” popes, references to Greeks in the *LP* before the reign of Stephen II were limited to a few examples as a linguistic or religious identifier. If the Romanness of the east and those living in it was not implicitly accepted, it was at least not outright denied. The exception to this, of course, was when the inhabitants of Rome turned on Narses and his administration suddenly became composed of Greeks. Once the text no longer envisions a Roman community in the east, it falls back on an anachronistic terminology of Greekness. The east Romans then became a distinct peoples, like others encountered in the *LP*.⁵³² They were the recipients of stereotypes traditionally associated with the Greeks in the more distant past.⁵³³ They had their own customs, state, and emperor, and a history that was divergent from that of the Romans.⁵³⁴ The extent to which the Romanness of those in the east and their emperor was denied may be best exemplified by a moment at the time of pope Leo IV, when dissatisfaction appeared among elements of the Roman populace who wished to “expel the king and race of the Franks,” seemingly withholding him the title of emperor of the Romans.⁵³⁵ The dissidents sought the “aid of the Greeks” to remove the Franks, but the idea was not to return the title of Roman emperor to

⁵³¹ V. West-Harling, “The Roman Past in the Consciousness of the Roman Elites in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl, C. Ganter, C. Grifoni, and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 173-194.

⁵³² A *genus* in *LP* 105.30. See also *LP* 108.16.

⁵³³ *LP* 108.42. for “Greek fickleness.”

⁵³⁴ In the *LP*, the Eastern-Roman state becomes the empire of the Greeks 108.56. or the kingdom of the Greeks 108.15. The emperor becomes the emperor of the city of Constantinople 106.33, or the emperor of the Greeks 107.19.

⁵³⁵ *LP* 105.110.

the emperor in Constantinople. Rather, the fear arose that the Greeks would attempt take Romans lands.⁵³⁶ These figures, referred to as the emperors of Constantinople or “of the Greeks,” who lorded over a kingdom or empire of the Greeks, appeared as a threat to the Romans and as unlikely candidates to be the recipients of Roman imperial authority.

A Vision of the Roman Past in post-Exarchal Ravenna

The wider influence and success of papal notions of Romanness expressed in the *Liber Pontificalis* are perhaps most evident by their reception in the city of Ravenna, once a capital of the west Roman state and for centuries the center of the exarchate. The imperial history of Ravenna was evident to those within the city and beyond it, both during the exarchate and in the period afterward.⁵³⁷ Ravenna not only housed the exarch, but also other high ranking military officials who were most often of Constantinopolitan origin and formed the core of the city’s small-Greek speaking population.⁵³⁸ The city was a node, though not necessarily the most important one, through which Roman law was promulgated in Italy.⁵³⁹ More obviously, it was the source for physical manifestations of imperial authority, as it is from here the Roman army would set out against internal and external threats against the peninsula.⁵⁴⁰ A mint was located within the city that produced coinage depicting the image of Roman emperors, or in the style of

⁵³⁶ *LP* 105.111.

⁵³⁷ Gillett has demonstrated scholarship has tended to over emphasize the preeminence of Ravenna as an imperial center in the fifth century – though this does not preclude its imperial history from being recognized. See, A. Gillett, “Rome, Ravenna and the Last Western Emperors,” *PBSR* 69 (2001): 131-167.

⁵³⁸ Guillou attempts to document the size of this community at various points during the period of the Exarchate, though it has been generally agreed that the extrapolation of the rather small onomastic sample overstated their numbers. Guillou, “Demography and Culture in the Exarchate of Ravenna.” See also, Schoolman, “Local Networks and Witness Subscriptions in Early Medieval Ravenna,” *Viator* 44.3 (2013): 21-42.

⁵³⁹ Corcoran notes that involvement in religious policy is more evident in the sources than the circulation of imperial laws, and that Constantinople often bypassed Ravenna in its communication with Rome. Simon Corcoran, “Roman Law in Ravenna,” *Ravenna: Its Role in Earlier Medieval Change and Exchange*, eds. Judith Herrin and Jinty Nelson (University of Chicago Press, 2016), 163-198.

⁵⁴⁰ The primacy of Ravenna in exarchal Italy was likely a result of its relative proximity to Constantinople. See, Gillett, *Rome, Ravenna and the Last Western Emperors*, 162-165.

Roman emperors, from its time as capital of the west Roman state through its capture by the Lombards.⁵⁴¹ It has been shown that the Ravennates at least twice participated in traditional Roman victory celebrations.⁵⁴² Recall also that, in the survey of sixth century Greek and Latin sources that introduce this chapter, several authors find Roman living here.⁵⁴³ The presence of the imperial apparatus within the city and its importance to the imperial court highlight some of the ways in which Ravenna and its inhabitants were connected to Romanía.

Much attention has been placed on Ravenna's epigraphical record and its well-preserved mosaics, whose representations of Roman emperors connect the Ravennate community to the imperial court in Constantinople. A monumentalization of the city took place after Honorius made it the western capital in the fifth century and this was continued by the Gothic rulers, whose construction projects connected their rule to their Roman predecessors.⁵⁴⁴ The Ravennate gate called "Ad Chalci," which alludes to the main entranceway to the imperial residence in Constantinople, is represented in a mosaic that shows Theoderic holding manifestations of Rome and Ravenna in his hands.⁵⁴⁵ The gateway originally led to the palace of Theoderic, which was also modelled upon Roman styles, was possibly placed near the palace of Valentinian III, and

⁵⁴¹ W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Lombards and of the Empires of Thessalonica, Nicaea, and Trebizond in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1911); J.P.C. Kent, "The Coinage of Theoderic in the Names of Anastasius and Justin I," in *Mints, Dies and Currency. Essays Dedicated to the Memory of Albert Baldwin*, ed. R.A.G. Carson (New York: Routledge, 1971): 67-74. See also the discussion of the coins of the Lombard king Aistulf, E. Cirelli, "Material Culture in Ravenna and its Hinterland between the 8th and 10th century," in *Three Empires, Three Cities: Identity, Material Culture, and Legitimacy in Venice, Ravenna, and Rome, 750-1000*, ed. V. West-Harling (Brepols: Turnhout, 2015), 107-108.

⁵⁴² The victory of the exarch Isaac in 641 and the defeat of a Constantinopolitan reprisal in 727, McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 257.

⁵⁴³ See also *Excerpta Valesiana* 82.

⁵⁴⁴ For an overview of the 5th century secular and ecclesiastic construction of Ravenna, and its symbolic importance for both Roman and Gothic rulership, see A. Augenti, "Nascita e sviluppo di una capitale: Ravenna nel V secolo," in *Le trasformazioni del V secolo: L'Italia, i barbari e l'Occidente roman*, eds. P. Delogu and S. Gasparri (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 351-377. See also, Herrin, *Ravenna*, 24-32.

⁵⁴⁵ S. Malmberg, "Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna, and Rome," in *Using Images in Late Antiquity*, eds. S. Birk, T. Myrup, and B. Poulsen (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 171-176. For the latter example, see Agnellus, *LPR* 153.

would later become the residence of the exarchs.⁵⁴⁶ Likewise, the mausoleum of Theodoric was built in imitation of those containing the remains of previous Roman emperors and a panegyric delivered at Theodoric's funeral emphasizes the Romanness of his rule.⁵⁴⁷

Justinianic additions to the city continued to connect the Ravennate community to the Roman court in Constantinople. The most famous of these contributions is a mosaic in the church of St. Vitale that depicts a procession in which the emperor, dressed in imperial regalia, and the people of Ravenna, as represented by members of their clergy, both participate.⁵⁴⁸ About a century later, a similar mosaic of the emperor Konstantinos IV (668-685) was constructed in S. Apollinare after his grant of autocephaly to the city's bishop Maurus. The repetition of this same imagery is clearly meant to associate Konstantinos IV with Justinian in a fashion that again unites the Ravennate community and the imperial court.⁵⁴⁹ An inscription from this same period on the tomb of the exarch Isaac refers to his service to the emperor in "guarding Rome unharmed and the west" – suggesting that he viewed his station in Ravenna as part of the protection of Romanía itself.⁵⁵⁰ These examples demonstrate a continuity of Roman models of rulership and an attempt to show cooperation between rulers and local Ravennates.

After the capture of Ravenna by the Lombards in 751, the city and its monuments retained their association with the Roman imperial past.⁵⁵¹ Upon entering Ravenna, Aistulf took

⁵⁴⁶ M.J. Johnson, "Toward a History of Theodoric's Building Program," *DOP* 42 (1988): 73-96; Augenti, "Theodoric's Palace in Ravenna: A New Analysis of the Complex," in *Housing in Late Antiquity: from Palaces to Shops*, eds. L. Lavan, L. Özgenel, and A. Sarantis (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 425-453. The removal of the mosaic is recorded by Agnellus, *LPR* 94.

⁵⁴⁷ Herrin, *Ravenna*, 137-138.

⁵⁴⁸ J.D. Alchermes, "Art and Architecture in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to Justinian*, ed. M. Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 344-348.

⁵⁴⁹ On the relationship between the Ravennate bishops and Constantinople, see Brown, "The Church of Ravenna and the Imperial Administration in the Seventh Century," *EHR* 94.30 (1979): 1-28.

⁵⁵⁰ On the importance of the sarcophagi of Ravenna with respect to identity articulation in general and this specific instance, see Schoolman, "Reassessing the Sarcophagi of Ravenna," *DOP* 67 (2013): 66-68.

⁵⁵¹ B. Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology," *DOP* 41 (1987): 103-109; Brown, "A Byzantine Cuckoo in the Frankish Nest? The Exarchate of Ravenna and the Kingdom of Italy in the Long

up residence in the palace that Theoderic and the exarchs had inhabited. As discussed above, Pepin returned Ravenna to the state of the Romans (meaning the papal state). Charlemagne removed spolia from the city decades after he was named emperor of the Romans by pope Leo III. Of particular significance was an equestrian statue of Theoderic placed before his palace - perhaps a conspicuous choice for a non-Roman ruler receiving Roman titles.⁵⁵² Thus, during Ravenna's time as an imperial capital and after, the city and its people continued to be associated with the Roman state.

Despite the connections with the rest of Romanía and the evident imperial legacy of the city, the people of Ravenna demonstrated many of the same sentiments of separation from the Roman state as did the other cities of the peninsula. Ravenna saw independent bases of power form outside the structure of the exarchate that, at times, superseded it. A Ravennate civic identity that seemed perfectly compatible with being Roman at the outset of the sixth century, cohered against east Roman rule over the course of the exarchate. Out of the estrangement of Ravenna's citizens from the imperial court, exacerbated by the end of the exarchate, papal conceptions of Romanness superseded east Roman claims within the city of Ravenna.

Agnellus' *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, which introduced this chapter, provides a view of how the history of the Roman state and its people was interpreted within Ravenna. Agnellus compiled this text over a long period in the first half of the ninth century, less than a hundred years after the Lombard conquest of the city.⁵⁵³ The text itself is modelled on the *LP*, in part, to establish Ravenna's antiquity and prestige as a peer of Rome. It is particularly hostile

Ninth Century," in *After Charlemagne: Carolingian Italy and its Rulers*, eds. C. Ganter and W. Pohl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 185-197.

⁵⁵² Agnellus, *LPR* 94.

⁵⁵³ For an overview of this text and its author, see the introduction of D.M. Deliyannis, *Agnellus of Ravenna: The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2004), 6-90; J.M. Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna: Later Latin Texts and Contexts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

towards the Roman papacy and any Ravennate bishops who had supported it, while it praises those members of the city who had defended Ravenna's autonomy. While the history of the city's bishops is the primary focus of the *LPR*, it does, at times, look beyond the city of Ravenna and include moments when the city's own history intersected with the wider world. The *LPR*'s vision of Roman history reveals the influence of the papal notions of Romanness found in the *LP*, by associating Roman identity with the city of Rome in Italy and rejecting the Romanness of the east Roman state and its inhabitants.

Agnellus' view of the Roman people is generally restricted to those inhabiting the city of Rome. In the few instances when the text does reveal the existence of Romans outside of the city, they remain limited to the Italian peninsula and are only present in passages lifted from other texts. As discussed above, Agnellus borrows a passage from Paul the Deacon on Phokas' seizure of the Roman state. He refers to the kingdom of the Romans, a territorial body that included the provinces in the east, but his view of who constituted the Roman people is more limited in scope. In another instance, the *LPR* states that the Ravennate bishop John I (477-494) mollified the threats of Odoacer "not only for the citizens of Ravenna, but for all Romans."⁵⁵⁴ This appears to be a reference to those inhabiting the peninsula beyond the city of Rome, but the emphasis is on the inversion of trope found in the *LP* in which the Romans are found to be the saviors of "all Italy."⁵⁵⁵ In attempting to gain prestige at the expense of the city of Rome, the text may exaggerate the extent of the Roman people. In an unspecified moment of "ancient history," Agnellus recalls that the Roman senate failed the liberty of the Romans and the prosperity of its provincial citizens up through the time of Narses.⁵⁵⁶ That this includes Romans beyond the city

⁵⁵⁴ Agnellus, *LPR* 39.

⁵⁵⁵ As Deliyannis notes, this is a reversal of the *LP*, in which Rome saves all Italy. Deliyannis, *Agnellus of Ravenna*, 146 n. 19. Also recall the inscription of Narses outside Rome, in which the imperial army is the restorer of all Italy.

⁵⁵⁶ Agnellus, *LPR* 95.

of Italy is confirmed a few lines later, when Narses plundered “all the Romans of Italy.”⁵⁵⁷ In the *LPR*, the Roman people only exceed the confines of the city in the ancient past and do not extend beyond the Italian peninsula.

Roman emperors, however, do exist in the *LPR* beyond the confines of the city of Rome even if the Roman people do not. Though the emperors and their empires are generally left non-descript, Agnellus is presumably referring to Roman ones throughout the text. He describes the emperor Honorius (393 to 423) dressed in imperial costume and desiring a royal dwelling in the city, before being tricked by a local builder into building a church instead.⁵⁵⁸ The favorability that the text bestows on the emperors in the text, including those in Constantinople, corresponds closely with the perceived relationship between the city and any particular emperor. Valentinian III, for example, is praised for his adornment of Ravenna and his placement of the city at “the head of Italy in place of Rome.”⁵⁵⁹ His palace, “At the Laurel,” was built where “the ancients” crowned those who has participated in triumphal ceremonies. Justinian I, the first emperor mentioned who ruled from Constantinople, is especially praised in the text for his time as emperor.⁵⁶⁰ Zeno is noted to have been of “Isaurian origin,” but his appropriateness to “rule the nations” is not doubted by the text.⁵⁶¹ Even Theodoric ruled “in the manner of the Romans.”⁵⁶² Though there are moments of contention between Ravenna and these earlier emperors, Agnellus does not dispute their authority over Ravenna or question their validity as Roman emperors.

The discrepancy that exists between the extent of the Roman people and the Roman state reveals the influence of papal notions of Romanness in the *LPR*. Although the scope of the

⁵⁵⁷ Agnellus, *LPR* 95. Though this passage does not appear lifted from another source, it appears to reflect the popular tradition of Narses as the despoiler of Italy.

⁵⁵⁸ Agnellus, *LPR* 35-36.

⁵⁵⁹ Agnellus, *LPR* 40.

⁵⁶⁰ Agnellus, *LPR* 90.

⁵⁶¹ Agnellus, *LPR* 94.

⁵⁶² Agnellus, *LPR* 39.

Roman people in the *LPR* occasionally look beyond the city of Rome, it does not extend to those inhabiting the east Roman state. Instead, the text describes “Greeks” as a people who are distinct from both Romans and Ravennates, in the same way as it refers to the Goths and Franks.

Nevertheless, despite rejecting the Roman identity of those inhabiting the east, the text initially accepts the authority of those ruling in Constantinople as Roman emperors, even those whom the text does not view positively. Agnellus’ vision of Roman authority is divorced from notions of ethnicity, similar to the conceptualization of Roman imperial authority developed in the *LP*.

The first mentions of “Greeks” in the text are limited to language and religious rites, rather than an indication of a separate community.⁵⁶³ Yet, the references to the Greek language underscore the perceived foreignness of east Romans to an audience of the *LPR*.⁵⁶⁴ The most vivid example comes from the late seventh century when a certain Johannicis became renowned within Ravenna for his knowledge of Greek.⁵⁶⁵ Johannicis appears in the text at a moment when the exarchal staff lacked someone from the city with sufficient ability to correspond with the imperial court. The exarch, intrigued by the possibility of filling this void, first tested the man by asking him to read aloud a letter written in Greek and then by translating a Latin text into Greek. The exarch, pleased to find someone who “used Greek as well as he used Latin, and held Latin as Greek” closely guarded Johannicis. He refused to allow Johannicis to leave the exarchal palace and only let him depart for the imperial court in Constantinople after being “burdened by necessity as if by oaken beams.” In this story, knowledge of the Greek language is treated as a novelty, as though it was attained only by the local imperial staff. The exceptionality of

⁵⁶³ See, for example, Agnellus, *LPR* 86 and 154.

⁵⁶⁴ See also, Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 69.

⁵⁶⁵ Agnellus, *LPR* 120.

Johannicis is heightened by the exarch's extreme relief in identifying such a person and the great lengths the exarch goes to preserve him.

The text's first clear rejection of the Roman identity of those in the east appears in the context of an early eighth century conflict between the newly restored emperor Justinian II and some Ravennates who had apparently participated in his deposition years earlier.⁵⁶⁶ The citizens of Ravenna, excited by the arrival of a ship from Constantinople and the prospect of a celebration, ran out to meet the "commander of the Greeks" only to find that Justinian's punishment awaited them.⁵⁶⁷ The officials of the Roman state, who were previously non-descript, become "Greeks" for the first time in the narrative as the city entered open conflict with the imperial court. After the east Roman forces imprisoned the leading Ravennate citizens, the inhabitants of the city invested authority in a man named George (the son of Johannicis) to organize the city against "the Greeks."⁵⁶⁸ In another early eighth century conflict between the city and Constantinopolitan authorities, the imperial forces are again called "Greeks" and even "Byzantines."⁵⁶⁹ As the narrative advances to the period of Justinian II, the text envisions a Roman emperor who ruled over Greeks.

After the death of Justinian, the text describes how "the Greeks raised up a new emperor over them (levaverunt super se Pelasgi novum imperatorem), and they made him lord of the whole earth, and the empire was confirmed in his hand."⁵⁷⁰ It does not appear that he is suggesting that the "Greeks" elected an emperor, in this case the emperor Phillipikos, to rule only over their own ethnic community, in the same way that peoples such as the Goths and Franks

⁵⁶⁶ According to Agnellus, at least. On the imperial punishment of Ravenna, A.N. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1980), 135-140; Brown, "Justinian II and Ravenna," *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995): 29-36.

⁵⁶⁷ Agnellus, *LPR* 137.

⁵⁶⁸ Agnellus, *LPR* 140. This appears to be the foundation of the city's military. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 97.

⁵⁶⁹ Agnellus, *LPR* 153.

⁵⁷⁰ Agnellus, *LPR* 143.

have their own rulers in the text.⁵⁷¹ The reference to a singular empire, and one of such renown, indicates that Agnellus is referring to the Roman empire and a Roman emperor lording over its territory. Agnellus says nothing more about the legitimization of emperors than he does in this instance about the elevation of Phillipikos. That is, he does not explain how exactly the “Greeks” (or rather Pelasgians) were able to nominate an emperor to rule over the Roman state, but the holder of this position clearly did not receive it from the will of a Roman ethnic community. Although Agnellus may have implicitly accepted Phillipikos as bearing the title of Roman emperor, he rejects the Roman identity of those who elevated him to that position.

After Phillipikos, no Roman emperors are mentioned until the Carolingians. This is not to imply that Agnellus views a break in the continuity of imperial rule, rather it is likely a result of the genre and aims of the text. When Agnellus does turn to the Carolingians, however, he is much more explicit in how he perceives their titles and the justification upon which those titles are bestowed. In the example of Phillipikos, the “Greeks raised up” an emperor, but Charlemagne, in contrast, “received the empire of the Romans from Pope Leo III.”⁵⁷² In Agnellus’ description of Charlemagne, the success of Papal notions of Roman authority is evident. Less than a century after the fall of exarchate and half a century after the crowning Charlemagne, Agnellus records that the emperor of the Romans received his title because he was invested with it by the pope. Elsewhere, he refers to the empire of the Frankish Romans (Romanorum Francorum imperium) and in the poem that introduces the *LPR*, it is the Carolingians who hold the “scepter of empire.”⁵⁷³ The line of emperors, the conceptualization of

⁵⁷¹ Agnellus, *LPR* 90.

⁵⁷² Agnellus, *LPR* 94.

⁵⁷³ Agnellus, *LPR* 166. See Deliyannis, *Agnellus of Ravenna*, n. 13. See the prefatory verses of the *LPR*. See also, Schoolman, “Representations of Lothar I in the Liber pontificalis Ravennatis,” in *Networks of Bishops, Networks of Texts. Manuscripts, Legal Cultures, Tools of Government in Carolingian Italy at the Time of Lothar I*, eds. G. de Angelis and F. Veronese (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2022), 111-129.

their authority, and the separation of the Roman imperial title and Roman ethnic identity, all show the influence of the papal tradition on Agnellus' text.

The story of the Roman history as recorded by the *LPR* is one of continuity.⁵⁷⁴ The Roman people existed in the past just as they continue at the time of Agnellus. The position of Roman emperor remains occupied, and the Roman state still exists. However, the definition of each of these aspects of Romanness has changed from the broader conceptions of Romanness that could be found in the fifth and sixth centuries, even in Ravenna, and that likely persisted for some time longer. Agnellus' Romans are relegated to the distant past, where they seem to be confined to the Italian peninsula, and to the contemporary inhabitants of the city of Rome. Roman emperors exist in unbroken continuity, but the line of emperors that Agnellus discusses begins with Honorius and ends with the Carolingian Louis, whose title is conferred upon him by the pope. Finally, the Roman state, of which Ravenna remains a part, persists but its territorial extent no longer includes the east, where the Greeks and their emperor reign. When Agnellus acknowledges the contemporary rule of the Romans, it is the papal administration of Rome that he has in mind.⁵⁷⁵ This conception of the Roman past is in line with papal representations that stress the primacy of the city in the legitimization of emperors and that knowingly deny the identities of those in the east.

Conclusion

The city of Ravenna and the papal court located there were not the only nodes through which notions of Romanness were communicated and received at the time of the exarchate. The

⁵⁷⁴ Brown, "Romanitas and Campanilismo: Agnellus of Ravenna's View of the Past," in *The Inheritance of Historiography 350-900*, eds. C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1986), 107-114.

⁵⁷⁵ Agnellus, *LPR* 284.

previous chapter explored how some Constantinopolitan sources projected a view of continuity within southern Italy when rationalizing the territorial losses and demographic changes in the region. The same sources treat northern and central Italy similarly reimagine the post-exarchal political situation in a manner more favorable to the court in Constantinople.⁵⁷⁶ Theophanes attributes the break to the late 720's, simply writing that Gregory II "severed Rome, Italy, and all the western lands from civil and ecclesiastical subjection to Leo and the latter's domain."⁵⁷⁷ Nikon of the Black Mountain in the eleventh century, and other polemicists against Latin Christians, argue that the city of Rome and its Frankish rules had been long corrupted by the many heresies introduced to the city by the Vandals in the fifth century.⁵⁷⁸ As seen in Chapter 2, Arabic authors represented the conflicts in southern Italy as being against the "Rum." Jewish authors from southern Italy find themselves living in the land of the Romans, a term that appear interchangeable with Greeks.⁵⁷⁹ Pre-Carolingian Frankish texts demonstrate their own ongoing relationship with perceptions of Romanness.⁵⁸⁰ There were many ways in which the Roman people and state were understood within Italy.⁵⁸¹ One text, an addendum to the *Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis*, even envisions Roman emperors residing in Constantinople in complete continuity with a line that end with Konstantinos VII, excluding papal and Carolingian imperial

⁵⁷⁶ *De Administrando Imperio* 28.64. The Venetians, for example, are expressed as refusing to serve the Franks out of their loyalty to the Romans.

⁵⁷⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 408.

⁵⁷⁸ M. Levy-Rubin, "The Errors of the Franks by Nikon of the Black Mountain: Between Religious and Ethno-Cultural Conflict," *Byzantion* 71.2 (2001): 422-437.

⁵⁷⁹ In the eleventh century *Chronicle of Ahimaaz*, see the king over the Romans in 5b and 7c, and king of the Greeks 16c. In the tenth century, see Shabbatai Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni* 226-227.

⁵⁸⁰ Sarti, "From Romanus to Graecus."

⁵⁸¹ G. Vocino, "Looking up to Rome: Romanness through the Hagiography from the Duchy of Spoleto," in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, eds. W. Pohl, C. Gantner, C. Grifoni and M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 197-215; L.A. Berto. "The Others and their Stories: Byzantines, Franks, Lombards, and Muslims in Ninth Century Neapolitan Narrative Texts," *The Medieval History Journal* 19 (2016): 34-56; T. Granier, "Rome and Romanness in Latin southern Italian sources, 8th–10th centuries."

claims.⁵⁸² There was not a universal conception of Romanness during the existences of exarchal Italy or in the period after.

Most of the notions of being Roman that developed in Italy show the direct influence of Rome and Constantinople. However, it is the papal tradition, which separated Romanness from its ethnic component, that was seen as the most threatening to the court in Constantinople and that would have the most long-lasting success in claiming the legacy of the Roman past.⁵⁸³ The *LP* already notes the frustrations that this would have for those Romans in the east.⁵⁸⁴ These same conflicts are paralleled in the letters of Pope Nicholas I to Michael III in 865, Louis II to Basileios I in 871, and the Liudprand of Cremona's description of Nikephoros Phokas in 968 – all of which, among other claims, stress the primacy of the city of Rome in defining Romanness.⁵⁸⁵ The papal claim to Romanness is not entirely distinct from the east Roman one. Both emphasize the primacy of the Roman people and the authority conferred by them to name emperors of the Romans, but they disagree about who exactly those Roman people are.

⁵⁸² *Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis*, 484-486.

⁵⁸³ See again, Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 11-17.

⁵⁸⁴ *LP* 108.43.

⁵⁸⁵ For the letter to Michael, see Nicholas I, *Epistolae* 88. E. Chrysos, "New Perceptions of Imperium and Sacerdotium in the Letters of Pope Nicholas I to Emperor Michael III," *T&MByz* 22.1 (2018): 313-339. For the letter to Basil, see Louis II, *Letter of Emperor Louis II to the Constantinopolitan Emperor Basil I*. S. Fanning, "Imperial Diplomacy Between Francia and Byzantium: The Letter of Louis II to Basil I in 871," *Cithara* 34 (1994): 3-17; E. Kislinger, "Erster und zweiter Sieger. Zum Byzantinisch-Karolingischen bündnis bezüglich Bari 870-871," *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 50 (2013): 245-258. For the description of Nikephoros Phokas, see Liudprand of Cremona, *The Embassy of Liudprand the Cremonese Bishop to the Constantinopolitan Emperor Nicephoros Phocas on behalf of the August Ottos and Adelheid*. See also, S. Dmitriev, "The Cultural Context of Byzantium's Political and Religious Controversy with the West in the Ninth Century," *Porphyra* 24 (2015): 4-27.

CONCLUSION: Unbecoming Romans

But now that those statues were carried off to Constantinople, the aforementioned emperor Alexander produced such words: “At the time when the emperors of the Romans were renowned, these statues were revered.” Therefore, at once, he called for silken attire and placed it around each statue. After he had given himself to sleep on the subsequent night, a most illustrious man appeared to him and malevolently arrived above, hitting him in the chest with a forceful blow and then divulged his name, saying, “I am the prince of the Romans, Peter!” [Alexander] then awoke with a great fear, he began to throw up blood and, in this way, he expired in a final death.⁵⁸⁶

The passage above can be found in the late tenth century *Chronicon Salernitanum*, a local chronicle from the southern Italian city of Salerno.⁵⁸⁷ This city existed amidst the influences of both Rome and Constantinople.⁵⁸⁸ Recall that Konstantinos VII wrote that Salerno had long existed within the Roman domain and had been returned by Basileos I to a perfectly Roman order. The *Chronicon Salernitanum*, in the lines preceding the passage above, explains how the Romans used to monitor a collection of 70 statues, one to represent each *gens*, and should the bell on one of the statues ring, the Romans would know that one of those *gens* had rebelled.⁵⁸⁹ Here, the passage appears to acknowledge the line of Roman emperors continues to Constantinople, before suggesting that those emperors had been superseded and no longer lived up to the stands of those more ancient Romans. The text indicates that emperor Alexandros himself recognized this lapse and had attempted to restore these statues to their former condition.

⁵⁸⁶ *Chronicon Salernitanum* 131.

⁵⁸⁷ It has been suggested that the passage suggests the “Byzantines” as usurpers of the Roman State due to their lack of religious Orthodoxy. Berto, “The Image of the Byzantines in Early Medieval South Italy,” 10-11. See also Peters-Custot, “L’identité des Grecs de l’Italie méridionale byzantine,” 199; J. Kujawinski, “Le immagini dell’altro nella cronachistica del Mezzogiorno longobardo,” *RSI* 118.3 (2006): 800-802. The title “vir clarissimus” used for Peter has its own connection to the Roman tradition. See Schoolman, “Vir Clarissimus and Roman Titles in the Early Middle Ages,” *Medieval Prosopography* 32 (2017): 1-39.

⁵⁸⁸ V. Ramseyer, *The Transformation of a Religious Landscape: Medieval Southern Italy, 850–1150* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 12-36.

⁵⁸⁹ *Chronicon Salernitanum* 131.

The emperor was defeated by Saint Peter “the prince of the Romans (Romanorum princeps),” who asserted his authority as their sovereign.

This anecdote serves as an apt illustration for notions of Romanness that would dominate in the Latin west and one that captures papal tradition in its contemporary moment. Even then, an earlier part of the text clarifies that the reason Basileios I was called “lord emperor” was because this term was appropriate for “the one who rules the Roman kingdom – that is, the Constantinopolitan one. The kings of the Gauls have now usurped such a name, which they were in no way called in antiquity.”⁵⁹⁰ This text is aware of the debates over Roman imperial titles. It is confirmed for Basileios and denied to Alexandros, as the author states his own interpretation of the Roman legacy. This text shows its own understanding of Romanness, one that falls somewhere in between the papal and Constantinopolitan traditions. Perceptions and expressions of Romanness, especially at the margins of Romania, were complex and seemingly existed in multiplicity at any given moment.

As the outset of each chapter has established, the outer provinces were observably Roman spaces. Collective expressions of Romanness were articulated and accepted by other Romans, even if some occasionally looked toward the provinces with mild disdain or employ stereotypes against them. Cretans, for example, could seemingly never escape their biblical association with falsity.⁵⁹¹ Roman authors, on the whole, recognized the historical and contemporary inhabitation of Romans in these more distant regions at the start of the eighth century, with the notable exception of central and northern Italy. These regions are described as integral parts of the

⁵⁹⁰ *Chronicon Salernitanum* 131. Here Basileios is a Roman emperor, though his people are the *Greci* in *Chronicon Salernitanum* 4, for example.

⁵⁹¹ *The Life of Saint Nikolaos the Studite* 2. See again, Kaldellis “Provincial Identities in Byzantium.” See also, D.C. Smythe, “Byzantine Identity and Labelling Theory,” in *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence*, ed. K. Fledelius (Copenhagen: Eventus Publishers, 1996), 26-37.

Roman state, and its subjects were participants in the broader Roman world. Syracuse, for example, could be imagined by Konstans II as the home for the imperial court and by the rebel Sergios as a place to reconstitute the Roman state. The recognition of their Romanness, moreover, was distinct from their political and religious identity. The Lombards were fellow subjects of the emperor, but they remained “friends and allies” of the Romans – not Romans themselves.⁵⁹² Attaleiates in the eleventh century claimed that the “Albans and Latins” were sharers of the Roman *politeia* (τῆς ἰσοπολιτείας ἡμῶν συμμετέχοντες),” but they remained a non-Roman people.⁵⁹³

Non-Roman sources, especially the Arabic ones, recognize Romanness as an ethnic identity distinct from a religious or political identity. Arabic writers distinguish the Romans from other Christian groups and connect the affairs of provincial Romans to the concerns of those in Constantinople, even when they were longer under direct Roman political authority. One source records that Nikephoros I asked that letters addressed to him ceased calling him the king of the Christians, as “This is a lie... I am the king of the *Rum*.”⁵⁹⁴ Authors who described *Greci*, even if they denied the self-expressed identity of those whom they observed, connected them to the rest of the inhabitants of the Roman state. Norman kings replicated Roman models of rule upon conquering Sicily and becoming rulers of a Greek-speaking population.⁵⁹⁵ In sum, the provinces and their inhabitants were more Roman than is sometimes represented in modern scholarship.

⁵⁹² See for example the *Taktika* 18.74 and Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 151 and 264.

⁵⁹³ Michael Attaleiates, *History* 3.1. It is unclear what people is indicated to by the label “Albans,” though it has most recently been argued that the *Albanoi* is a reference to those inhabiting the Balkans. See J. Quanrud, “The Albanoi in Michael Attaleiates’ History: Revisiting the Vranoussi-Ducellier Debate,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 45.2. (2021): 149-165. Olson has suggested the “Latins and Albans” are to be understood as the Normans, whom Attaleiates is attempting to describe more positively. See A. Olson, “Working with Roman History: Attaleiates’ Portrayal of the Normans,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 41.1 (2017): 1-14. The Normans have their own *genos* in 18.2 and both *phylon* and *genos* in 18.5. Elsewhere, the Normans are of another *phylon* from the Romans, 18.3.

⁵⁹⁴ El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 98.

⁵⁹⁵ K.C. Britt, “Roger II of Sicily: Rex, Basileus, and Khalif? Identity, Politics, and Propaganda in the

Local expressions of identity are harder to discern, but there are instances in which the identity of those in the provinces are perceived in terms of Romanness. The *Cambridge Chronicle* provides a view from within Sicily that is interpreted as Roman by its Arabic translators. Theophanes Continuatus used the work Theognostos Grammarian, who may have been a native of Sicily, in writing about the Sicilian Romans' attempt to acclaim a new emperor.⁵⁹⁶ The letters of the patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos, who was born in Italy, display a concern for “our *politeia*.”⁵⁹⁷ When Saint Neilos traversed beyond the boundaries of imperial territory in southern Italy he found himself “among the Latins,” and he makes a comparison between his experience and the Babylonian exile by questioning “how should we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”⁵⁹⁸ When Neilos returned to a Roman city wearing “foreign” clothing, the local children identified him by a number of non-Roman ethnonyms.⁵⁹⁹

Romanness appears to be the implicit context for the Greek-speaking Christians inhabiting these provinces. When the inhabitants of Sicily exercised their political right to name an emperor, both Roman and Arabic sources understood that they meant a Roman one. The tenth century author of the *Life of Saint Elias Spelaiotes* finds the rebellion (*ἀποστασίαν*) of a Roman commander in Calabria to be against the emperor and the *ethnos*.⁶⁰⁰ That the author can express pride in Elias’ home city of Reggio as his *patria* does not preclude him from identifying with

Cappella Palatina,” *Mediterranean Studies* 16 (2007): 21-45. D.M. Hayes, *Roger II of Sicily: Family, Faith, and Empire in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 171-185. See also, E.N. Boeck, *Imagining the Byzantine Past: The Perception of History in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Skylitzes and Manasses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁹⁶ Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, 80.

⁵⁹⁷ See, for example, Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letters* 75.

⁵⁹⁸ *The Life of Saint Neilos of Rossano* 72-74.

⁵⁹⁹ The saint wore a fox pelt on his head and was harassed by children, referring to him variably as a Bulgarian, Frank, and Armenian. *The Life of St Neilos of Rossano* 41.

⁶⁰⁰ *The Life of Saint Elias Spelaiotes* 54.

Romanía as well.⁶⁰¹ Hagiographies situated geographically closer to Constantinople show similar pride in their subject's locale.⁶⁰²

There are ways in which those in the provinces developed and maintained a connection to other Romans, reinforcing characteristics that they held in common and that differentiated them from non-Romans. Imperial imagery circulated, communities acclaimed the emperor, and they prayed for him and for the benefit of the Roman polity.⁶⁰³ Southern Italian "exultet rolls," like that produced in Bari in the early eleventh century, depicted east Roman emperors and sang in praise of them.⁶⁰⁴ Roman citizens were united by their participation in the Roman legal and tax systems.⁶⁰⁵ The selection of personal names, the use of language, and participation in community traditions could mark one as Roman. A plea from eighth century Istria records how aspects of life ranging from the order of the procession to receive the eucharist to the table arrangement for communal meals was determined by the receipt of titles from the emperor in Constantinople.⁶⁰⁶ Derision of "Greek" customs are among the invectives that the Lombard sources levy against those in southern Italy.⁶⁰⁷ Continued study of the material culture of these regions may further uncover the consumption patterns that differentiated the Romans of the provinces from their non-

⁶⁰¹ The *Life of Saint Elias Spelaiotes* 3. Peters-Custot finds that this mention links the saint to the "West" in "L'identité des Grecs de l'Italie méridionale byzantine."

⁶⁰² While Nikon has a heavenly *patria*, he has an earthly one in the "Polemoniakian area situated near the Armenian Theme." The *Life of Saint Nikon* 1. Likewise, Saint Theodore of Kythera's *patria* was the "illustrious city of Korone." The *Life of Saint Theodore* 2. Peter of Argos' *patria* of Constantinople is extolled by his hagiographer. The *Life of Saint Peter of Argos* 2. See also, B.K. Bayrı, "Byzantine Universalism and Patris: Geographic Identity Markers in the Late Byzantine Martyria," in *Identity and the Other in Byzantium, Papers From the 4th International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, eds. K. Durak and I. Jevtic (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2019), 113-124.

⁶⁰³ On imagery, Karlin-Hayter, "Appartenir à l'Empire."

⁶⁰⁴ G.B. Ladner, "The 'Portraits' of Emperors in Southern Italian Exultet Rolls and the Liturgical Commemoration of the Emperor," *Speculum* 17.2 (1942): 181-200.

⁶⁰⁵ Laiou, "Institutional Mechanisms of Integration."

⁶⁰⁶ McCormick, *The Imperial Edge*, 47-51.

⁶⁰⁷ Berto, "The Image of the Byzantines in Early Medieval South Italy."

Roman counter parts and connected them to the rest of Romanía.⁶⁰⁸ There are likely more ways that notions of Romanness were communicated and reinforced between the capital and the provinces. Roman identity as it was expressed in local contexts requires more study, but the burden of proof should be to establish that another identity was being expressed in its place.

By recovering the Romanness of the provinces, it is also possible to examine the perception of their collective and individual relationships with the Constantinopolitan court. There is a clear expectation that they were integral parts of Romanía and its citizens the responsibility of the Roman emperor. On the one hand, failures such as those of Michael III in “the west” and Leon III in Italy were a cause of blame for the respective emperors. Attacks against the outer provinces were treated as parts of a series of threats against the whole Roman state by Genesios. The loss of Syracuse was a serious concern for Basileios I’s biographers, who shift the blame elsewhere and emphasize the emperor’s duty toward the western provinces.⁶⁰⁹ The *LP* points to the lack of imperial support as part of the reasoning to find a new protector for the Romans, and Agnellus’ Ravennates appear to be contending alone against the Lombards. Perhaps the perception of ineffective imperial intervention is why the people of Rossano refused to provide military support to the emperor when they weighed the demands of the state against the potential risks of Muslim reprisal.⁶¹⁰

Non-Romans recognized the relationship between the provinces and the imperial center. Lombard and Muslim attacks in southern Italy served as a form of negotiation with the Roman state for better terms. A Muslim soldier threatened that attacks in Sicily were part of a greater

⁶⁰⁸ Curta, “Ethnic Identity and Archaeology,” in *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. C. Smith (New York: Springer, 2020), 2507-2514. See again Guillou on monasticism in southern Italy and Sicily. Guillou, “Grecs d’Italie du Sud et de Sicile au Moyen Age.”

⁶⁰⁹ Nikolaos Mystikos picks up this same story, *Letters* 75.

⁶¹⁰ The *Life of Saint Neilos of Rossano* 60-61. G. Strano, “A proposito delle relazioni fra Arabi e Bizantini in Calabria (IX-XI secolo),” *Aionons: Miscellanea di Studi Storica* 23 (2020): 63-94.

campaign against Constantinople according to Theodosios the Monk's account. Sicilians twice sought after Roman emperors for their aid and Leon VI was reportedly devastated by the loss of Taormina. On the other hand, the return of these territories to the Roman sphere could provide a reason for praise. The Macedonian dynasty pointed to the real and imagined recovery of parts of Italy to deflect from other military failures. Theodosios the Deacon praises Nikephoros Phokas for making Chandax a Roman city again, even though it was a foundation of the Cretan Muslims. The freedom of Sicily and Italy are both invoked in praise of Justinian, and the latter sentiment was inscribed on a bridge outside Rome. Likewise, an inscription credits the emperor Romanos II, presumably while still a young co-emperor, with constructing a new fortification in Taranto after his father defeated the "rebellious and destructive peoples of Calabria."⁶¹¹ These sources laud not only the defeat of enemy armies or the expansion of a Roman empire, but also the reintegration of former Roman lands back into Romanía.

However, there is a reticence for the Constantinopolitan sources to observe Romans living outside of Romanía that appears to go beyond the ignorance or paucity of the sources. In places where one might expect to find Romans, and other sources confirm them, the Constantinopolitan writers express no affinity. The fate of Romans under non-Roman authority does not reflect well on a particular ruling emperor, especially if they are never "liberated." Romans in Italy and Sicily seemingly disappear in the works of Konstantinos VII, just as they are absent in Theodosios the Deacon's account of Crete. There are also taxonomic difficulties. The sources are not always clear and consistent with the regional labels that they employ. The people of Calabria are clearly situated among the Romans by Konstantinos VII, but they appear

⁶¹¹ This may be a reference to the Lombard inhabitants of the Crati Valley in Calabria and a rebellion in the late 940s and early 950s. On the inscription, see A. Jacob, "La reconstruction de Tarente par les Byzantins aux IX^e et X^e siècles: À propos de deux inscriptions perdues," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 68 (1988): 1–19.

to be counted as a foreign *ethnos* in a tenth century rebellion.⁶¹² Even then, it is not clear who the “Calabrians” are that are being described.⁶¹³ Later, Calabrians were one of the only people with whom the author of the so-called *Opusculum contra Francos* found solidarity.⁶¹⁴ The papal tradition is reticent to acknowledge a broad community of Romans for its own reasons, though it grounds them in a shared ancient past. It narrows the scope of Romanness, rejecting its ethnic components and giving authority over the Roman legacy to the people of Italian Rome.

There was the acknowledgement by contemporaries that Roman identity could lapse and another identity be accepted in its place. In the east Roman sources, the reasons for this are the same as the reasons one might become Roman. Changes in religion and customs are highlighted in each case study. Leon the Deacon and the *Life of Saint Nikon* both describe a process of assimilation on account of the time passed and relationships developed between the Romans and Muslims of Crete. Individual instances can be observed in cases like Photios, whom the sources assume rejected markers of being Roman and whose example shows the opportunity that Romans could find under non-Roman rule. In these contexts, the sources identify what appears to be “hybridity” in individuals maintaining the attributes of more than one group.⁶¹⁵ The descendants of Cretan Romans are treated as a third group, distinct from both Romans and Muslims. Some sources label analogous examples as *mixobarbaros*.⁶¹⁶ Perhaps further study of

⁶¹² Theophanes Continuatus 453-454.

⁶¹³ Noyé suggests that the Calabrians who defect to Landulf are the Latins of the Crati valley in “Byzantine Calabria,” 447. See Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* 263.

⁶¹⁴ See the proem of *Opusculum contra Francos*. On the misattribution of this text to Photios and its dating, see J. Darrouzès, “Le mémoire de Constantin Stilbès contre les Latins,” *REByz* 21 (1963): 55-56. According to the author of this text, the Calabrians have been orthodox since the beginning, while some of the Christian peoples aligned with the pope are more akin to the “ancient Greeks (τῶν παλαιῶν ἐλλήνων).” See also the discussion in Levy-Rubin, “The Errors of the Franks by Nikon of the Black Mountain,” 433-434.

⁶¹⁵ For the adoption of “exotic” artistic elements both in the court and in more provincial spaces, see A. Walker, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 165-174.

⁶¹⁶ Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, “Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle: nouvelles hiérarchies et nouvelles solidarités,” *T&MByz* 6 (1976): 99-124; Peters-Custot, “Le barbare et l’étranger dans l’Italie méridionale pré-normande.”

the material culture and its reception can better demonstrate how these groups expressed their identity, such as the set of earrings from Muslim ruled Crete that are inscribed with pseudo-Arabic markings.⁶¹⁷ There is some uncertainty for these observers as to how such populations fit into a world divided between Romans and non-Romans. For Leon VI, the Romans from southern Italy appear to have fundamentally changed due to their proximity to the Lombards.

What unites these various case studies is a sense of anxiety towards those who maintain some or all of the cultural profile associated with Romanness but are no longer participants and inhabitants of the state. There is a hesitancy to include those who have passed beyond the real or imagined boundaries of Romanía.⁶¹⁸ The Roman identity of the Peloponnesian Leon Sgouros, for example, was downplayed when he rebelled against the state and set about sieging Athens.⁶¹⁹ There are a few obvious exceptions. Romans enslaved by the Avars returned to Romanía, keeping their affiliation with their *genos* intact over several generations.⁶²⁰ Even then, the return of this group to participation in Roman society allowed their identity to be confirmed. Otherwise, when the sources do engage with the possibility of Romans beyond Romanía, they do so uncomfortably. The Cretan “apostates” receive special attention and violence for perceived transgressions, as do other “renegades” like Damianos of Tarsos and Leon of Tripoli. Just like Leon distrusts the Romans of Langobardia, Maurikios warned against those Romans on the Balkan borders who has forgotten “their own people.” Theodoros Daphnopates scoffs at the idea that Symeon would call himself king of the Bulgarians and the Romans, arguing that all Romans

⁶¹⁷ Walker, “Courtly Objects, Courtly Identities: Middle Byzantine Luxury Arts and the Material Culture of Elite Leisure,” in *Identity and the Other in Byzantium, Papers From the 4th International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, eds. K. Durak and I. Jevtic (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2019), 295-312.

⁶¹⁸ One borders and the imperial responsibility toward them, see Kaldellis, “Byzantine Borders were State Artifacts, not ‘Fluid Zones of Interaction’,” in *The Islamic-Byzantine Border in History: From the Rise of Islam to the End of the Crusades*, eds. D. G. Tor and A. D. Beihammer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 100-124.

⁶¹⁹ Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 4-5. Sgouros is “called a Christian and reckoned among the Romans” but found not fitting of these labels in his siege of Athens. See Niketas Choniates, *Annals* 606.

⁶²⁰ The *Miracles of Saint Demetrios* 2.285.

flee from him to their own *genos* (πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὡς ὁμογενεῖς καταφεύγουσιν).⁶²¹ For Leon the Deacon, Crete needed to be well-fortified not against external threats but the potential threat of those from the interior. When Roman populations fall beyond the line that divides the Roman and the non-Roman world, their participation in it is doubted and they become an identifiable “other” – an out group, distinct from the Romans.

Final Considerations

The scholarly reclamation of Romanness as an ethnic identity has primarily and necessarily focused on the more central lands of Romanía. There is also value to the study of identity in the provinces of the Roman state, as it is in such spaces that identity is contested and negotiated. There has been some reticence to view the provincial populations as inherent members of a broad Roman community, and the historiographic tradition of each province has its own reasonings for not accepting expressions of Romanness. More generally, however, it seems that the field has not yet fully turned its attention to exploring questions of identity in the provinces. There is some evidence that this is bound to be a part of the direction that the study of Romanía takes going forward.⁶²² There are more places and moments to be explored. Greek-speakers could refer to themselves as *Grecus*, at times, in an Italian context.⁶²³ They continued to

⁶²¹ Theodoros Daphnopates, *Letter* 5.40-42.

⁶²² Many of the chapters of the *Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium* look toward the provinces.

⁶²³ See the seventh century inscription of a certain Theodore, a “vir clarissimus grecus Vizanteus qui fuit fidelis et carus amicus multorum Rei Publicae iudicum.” A. Silvagni, *Monumenta epigraphica christiana saeculo XIII antiquiora quae in Italiae finibus adhuc exstant iussu Pii XII pontificis maximi I* (Rome: Pontificium institutum archaeologiae christianae, 1943), fig. 12.2. See R. Hunsucker and E. Roles, “Eine vergessene Erinnerung an das byzantinische Rom: Neudeutung und Rezeptionsgeschichte einer Grabinschrift aus dem 7. Jahrhundert in der S. Cecilia in Trastevere,” in *Monuments & Memory: Christian Cult Buildings and Constructions of the Past*, eds. M. Verhoeven, L. Bosman, H. van Asperen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 31-42.

be a prominent part of the landscape of southern Italy for centuries, still represented by the few remaining *Griko* speakers.⁶²⁴

The Roman tradition continued to evolve in the Latin west.⁶²⁵ The Ottonian emperors recognized the symbolic importance of Ravenna. In nearby Classe, Otto I constructed a palace and was compared with the Roman emperor Constantine I during a celebration of its construction.⁶²⁶ The renewed interest in a local saint named Barbatianus and the tenth century composition of his *Vita* likewise connected the Ottonian imperial court at Ravenna to its Roman predecessors.⁶²⁷ Romans could be found in the east throughout the early modern period and even into living memory.⁶²⁸ In acknowledging self-expressions of Romanness and recognizing how this identity could be activated and reimagined in new contexts, we gain a better understanding of the story that the Romans tell of themselves and how they viewed their community in relation to others. This dissertation hopes to contribute to these efforts, as the salience of Roman identity continues to be recognized and explored.

⁶²⁴ Peters-Custot, "Greek Communities in Post-Byzantine Italy." On Greek inscription in post-Roman southern Italy, see A. Rhoby, "The Greek Inscriptions of Norman-Staufian Apulia in the Late Eleventh, the Twelfth and the Thirteenth Centuries: Texts and Contexts," in *Oltre l'Alto Medioevo: Etnie, vicende, culture nella Puglia normanno-sveva* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2020), 393-417. On Greek speakers in southern Italy, see R. Browning, *Medieval & Modern Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 131-132 et passim. It is possible that these *Griko* speakers are speaking a form of Greek that predated Roman control of southern Italy. G. Rohlf, "Greek Remnants in Southern Italy," *The Classical Journal* 62.4 (1967): 164-169.

⁶²⁵ See the edited volume *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, eds. N. Aschenbrenner and J. Ransohoff (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Press, 2021).

⁶²⁶ Warner, D.A. "The Representation of Empire: Otto I at Ravenna," in *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500*, eds. B. Weiler and S. MacLean, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 134-135.

⁶²⁷ Schoolman, *Rediscovering Sainthood in Italy: Hagiography and the Late Antique Past in Medieval Ravenna* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁶²⁸ The painter Theophilos Hatzimihail refers to Konstantinos XI as the "*autokrator* of the Helleno-Romans." There is, of course, the well-known anecdote of Peter Charanis for the *Romaioi* of Lemnos at the beginning of the 20th century. See J.W. Barker, "Peter Charanis, a Portrait," *Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines* 6 (1979): 2. Edward Watts has encountered a similar anecdote from a member of the local San Diego Greek community in reference to the island of Rhodes in the 1940's, per personal communication. See also, A. Politis, "From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors," in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. D. Ricks and P. Magdalino (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 1-14.

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